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THE PROPHET OF ISLAM IN OLD FRENCH

THE ROMANCE OF MUHAMMAD (1258)

AND

THE BOOK OF MUHAMMAD'S LADDER (1264)

English Translations, With an Introduction

BY

REGINALD HYATTE



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INTRODUCTION

I. Alexandre du Pont's *Romance of Muhammad*

Muhammad (c. 570-632) is the principal subject of only two Old French works, Alexandre du Pont's *Romance of Muhammad* (*Li romans de Mahon*) and the anonymous 1264 version of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* (*Le livre de l'eschiele Mahomet*), a prose apocalypse deriving from an Arabic text in which Muhammad narrates his night journey and ascent to heaven with the angel Gabriel. The only English translations of both are presented here. The two French narratives differ greatly from one another in character, since the romance repeats and adapts anti-Islamic Christian polemics, histories, fictions, and oral legends whereas the prophetic relation reproduces Muslim traditions free of Christian interpretation. The wholly dissimilar representations of Muhammad's prophethood in these exceptional texts aim, however, at the same end with respect to French Christian audiences—discrediting Islam's foundations. Although neither work clearly had any value in an attempt to convert Muslims or challenge them directly, they might have served, nevertheless, a limited function as anti-Islamic propaganda on the 'home front.'

Verse 22 of *The Romance of Muhammad* names the poet, Alexandre du Pont, and verses 1993-97 indicate that in 1258 he composed the romance in Laon, famous for its cathedral school. Nothing more is known about him or other works that he may have authored. Two important features of Alexandre du Pont's poem are his romance formulation of a unique version of traditional Christian reports on Muhammad, which he converts anachronistically to a context familiar to his French contemporaries, and, also, his introduction to a French lay audience of a topic—Muhammad's prophethood and his 'errors'—which earlier in Western Europe, solely Latin writings, usually by and for clergymen, treated in any detail.

The French romance in octosyllabic couplets is an adaptation of Gautier of Compiègne's Latin *Otia de Machomete* (*Poem on Muhammad*), probably written after 1137. Although Alexandre du Pont, who

had an excellent knowledge of Latin, reworked the cleric Gautier's poem for a lay audience in a worldly manner, with merry banquets and grim battlefields in the style of French epic and romance, the rewriting exhibits some clerical features, such as a tendency to sermonize. For instance, the moral tale about God's inscrutable justice that he added at verses 219-84 seems well suited for a popular sermon.

The date and subject of the French romance suggest a lay audience's interest in Muhammad and its own relationship to Islam. Nonetheless, the Prophet portrayed here is an imaginary character, and the poem usually misrepresents the historical Muhammad in ways consistent with the derogatory tendencies of the Latin writings, including histories, cited in this introduction. The romance was composed soon after Louis IX's first crusade (1248-1254), during which the Christian armies under the king of France suffered defeat in the Near East. Alexandre du Pont's lesson in the moral tale mentioned above is that although God chastens those whom He loves and even permits the impious to prosper for a time, in the end He raises up His friends and humbles the wicked. Possibly some in the French poet's audience imagined the lesson to apply to their own case—the eventual triumph of the chastened Christians' cause and the defeat of the Prophet's followers. Indeed, in 1258 Mongol forces under Hülegü captured Muslim Baghdad and put an end to the Abbasid dynasty descended from Muhammad's family, and soon afterwards, the Christian rulers of Armenia and Antioch, in league with Hülegü, seized Damascus and performed mass in the chief mosque (Daniel, *Islam*, p. 134—for parenthetical references to books and articles, see the Select Bibliography.)

Jacques LeGoff has noted that in preparing for and engaging in his second crusade (1270), Louis IX seemed to aim as much at the conversion of Muslims as their defeat on the battlefield ("Saint Louis," pp. 45-47; see, also, Kedar, pp. 161-69.) Around the time of the romance's composition, missionaries, particularly Franciscans and Dominicans, were proselytizing in Islamic regions, and some Dominican houses established centers for the study of Arabic and other Oriental languages with a view to preparing missionaries (Kedar, pp. 136-45). Of course, the French romance is directed solely at a Christian lay audience, and the poet's extravagant allegations about Muhammad that serve to justify Christians' opposition to Islam seek neither an informed response

on the part of Muslims nor their conversion. Besides entertaining laymen, the romance might also have served in small part, by ridiculing the Messenger of God, to show contemporary readers in France how absurd it would be for a Christian even to consider converting to Islam, an invalid religion rooted in heresies and false prophecies—given that many such conversions occurred throughout the Middle Ages, one might imagine the narrative's objectives not to be simply frivolous. In its limited and fanciful manner, the romance contributes to a program on the French home front of discrediting Muhammad's teachings, the origins of which medieval Christian oral tradition and writings usually traced to Christian and Jewish heresies. By grossly misrepresenting Muhammad's doctrine as well as his life, it bolsters home Christians' assurance in the absolute, exclusive truth of their own faith at a time when stories about the Islamic world told by returning merchants and soldiers must have excited interest and, perhaps, wonder in French listeners, some of whom might one day venture into Muslim territory. Both the romance and its Latin source portray Muhammad as a heretic learned in the Christian religion and sacred texts who establishes his ungodly faith among the Arabs, all or mostly Christians, in his homeland. The *Otia*'s and Alexandre du Pont's original misrepresentation of Muhammad's laws on marriage—the poets' Prophet legislates, according to God's will, polyandry along with polygyny—aims to discredit them as the institution of adultery based on claims that are, for the Christian audience, patently false because they deny God's will revealed through Christ and the Church's sacrament of marriage. Further, the French romance justifies indirectly Christian crusading activities when it alleges that Muhammad's law requires Muslims to convert or exterminate Christians everywhere. In the service of Christian polemic on the domestic front, the *Otia*'s and the romance's main weapon is ridicule of Muhammad as well as the supposedly deluded, unchaste Muslims.

Alexandre du Pont does not attempt to conceal artfully or justify his reconfiguration of the seventh-century Arabian Prophet according to French social, literary, and political norms in his own time, nor does he hesitate to relocalize the subject matter by declaring Muhammad to be such a skillful geometer that he could calculate by visual means the distance between two sites near Laon (vss. 43-46). Alexandre du Pont's

reworking of his source material in forms that a thirteenth-century French audience would recognize as similar to its own time, place, and customs accords with common practices in medieval romance adaptations of Latin narrative works. Examples of the poet's anachronistic adaptation of his subject matter, independent of his Latin source, are seen in the luxury items that Muhammad trades, *vair* and *miniver* which came into use in France during the crusades, and at a wedding feast with European wines, minstrels, or *jongleurs*, sing to the accompaniment of contemporary instruments commonly mentioned in French romances. A battle scene including an antedated reference to Greek fire, courtly festivities, and marvelous elements original to the adaptation also illustrate attempts at making the poetic version of Muhammad's life conform to narrative expectations of medieval hearers or readers of French romance.

Alexandre du Pont portrays the Prophet's marriage to his former master's rich widow Khadījah and his accession to lordship over her many liege men and bourgeois subjects, who look to him for spiritual guidance and recognize him as their protector and leader in war. A sort of complementary opposite to Louis IX, the poet's Muhammad earns most undeservedly a reputation for piety, and all believe wrongly that God favors him. Although not called a king in this romance (he is in some Christian writings), Muhammad stands in his people's eyes as an intermediary between them and God—or the devil from the poet's viewpoint. His combined role as heresiarch and lord duplicates as a negative counterpart the convergence of earthly and supernatural powers in an ideal of Christian monarchy.

The romance poet recounts Muhammad's scandalous rise, by means of duplicitous oratory, knavery, lies, bribery, threats, and the devil's help, from servitude to a position of wealth and great power. In itself his rise to the top transgresses the rules of 'good' social order. On the other hand, his success in business and the management of his master's domain wins him the highest praise; his commercial know-how plays an important part in his suit for Khadījah's hand; and near the end of the romance, Muhammad restores his subjects' fortunes and brings them lasting peace after their crushing military defeat. The allusions to the positive influence of Muhammad's leadership on his people's peace and prosperity—for instance, in verses 1585-87 and 1864-74—perhaps gained approval from some in the poet's audience for what might appear

to be merchant-class virtues illustrated by this otherwise villainous antihero.

The unique example of an Old French romance on the subject of Muhammad's life, Alexandre du Pont's poem has its sources in a body of texts in Latin beginning with the translation from around 871-874 by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (c. 815-879) of the Greek *Chronicle* of the Byzantine historian Theophanes the Confessor (760?-817). During a period of French literature which saw significant developments in vernacular adaptation from Latin—for instance, Brunetto Latini composed around 1260 a first redaction of his French prose *Book of the Treasure* (*Li livres dou tresor*), his major work of vulgarization based in large part on medieval Latin sources—Alexandre du Pont's adaptation marks an advance in the humanization of the character of Muhammad for popular audiences. In contrast to the summary sketches in several Old French epic poems of the Prophet as a demonic idol or a drunkard whom swine tore apart (see d'Ancona, pp. 276-77, and Eckhardt, pp. 83-84), Alexandre du Pont's romance presents to French laymen a complete, although fictional account of his life, and its construction of him as a clever scoundrel, eloquent suitor, and respected leader is not wholly unsympathetic. In an attempt to comprehend and, of course, condemn Muhammad and his doctrines, earlier Latin polemicists, such as Peter the Venerable (c. 1092-1156), placed Islam in the context of Christian heresies with which the ecclesiastical reader would be familiar; in thereby reducing the 'otherness' of Islam with respect to Christian dogma and history, they brought Muhammad's religion and life itself into a doctrinal battlefield where Christian orthodoxy, fighting on its own ground and by its rules, alone determined victory. In writing for laymen, Alexandre du Pont domesticates his character of Muhammad by assimilating it to familiar structures of French fiction and society of their time. The poet's choice as his source text of the *Otia*, one of the more comical and less vehement of the many Latin works condemning the Prophet of Islam, indicates his will to humanize, rather than demonize, the fictional Muhammad as 'other.' Notwithstanding, a Muslim reader of any period would rightly find Alexandre du Pont's characterization to be blasphemous and, hence, intolerable.

Verses 4-32 of the romance repeat and supplement the Latin source's report on its own origins and chain of transmission: Alexandre du Pont took the subject from a poem by a monk named Gautier, whose abbot Garnier (or Gravier) had related to him all about Muhammad's life of deceit according to what a canon in Sens, Adam, heard from Dieudonné, a Christian cleric and former Muslim who had read as a youth about his misdeeds and ancestry. Gautier of Compiègne probably composed the *Otia de Machomete*, consisting of 545 unrhymed elegiac distichs, after 1137, when Garnier became abbot of Marmoutier in Tours—Alexandre du Pont failed to note, however, that his source states that Garnier told the tale to his fellow monk Gautier before becoming an abbot. Gautier of Compiègne, who in 1131 was prior of Saint-Martin-en-Vallée outside Chartres, also wrote a history of Marmoutier in Latin and *De miraculis beate Marie virginis*. Adam, the canon in Sens mentioned in verses 5-6 and 26 of the romance, is named Paganus at verse 13 of the *Otia*; he is perhaps the same Paganus who was abbot from 1119 or earlier of Sainte-Marie in Étampes, a monastery in the diocese of Sens (*Otia*, ed. Huygens, 1956, pp. 291-92). Gautier's account of his poem's origins in unnamed writings about Muhammad and oral transmission through several successive relations by Christian clerics seems plausible since all the transmitters are identifiable, excepting the former Muslim whom he does not name; and Alexandre du Pont's 'next-generation' genealogy, in spite of its fanciful naming of Dieudonné and Adam and the oversight of a detail, is substantiated by a collation of the romance and the *Otia*. Nevertheless, neither account is complete or entirely accurate regarding sources of information, and if the original texts were Islamic, as Gautier of Compiègne implies, then they must have been radically transformed—indeed, deformed—in the stages of oral transmission by Christians. In the following sections, we shall analyze, first, several items in the romance that are independent of or disagree with the *Otia* and, then, reports on Muhammad in the *Otia* along with the romance that derive from Christian, not Muslim, texts or are Gautier's inventions.

Besides adding in his adaptation descriptive elements characteristic of battle and banquet scenes in French epic and romance, Alexandre du Pont used written and oral sources other than the *Otia*, and regarding one important character in the Latin poem, he accuses the *Otia* of lying

or misrepresentation. First, Audimenef, whom Alexandre du Pont names as the Prophet's father (vs. 35), is absent from the *Otia*. Muhammad's father, who died before his birth, was 'Abdallâh, and his paternal uncle was 'Abd Manâf, known as Abû Tâlib, who raised him. The written source of the romance poet's error is most probably one of the later manuscripts of Peter of Toledo's Latin version (c. 1142) of the pseudonymous *Apology of al-Kindî* (*Risâlat al-Kindî*), a tenth-century or earlier epistolary debate in Arabic between a Muslim and a Christian: the two thirteenth or fourteenth-century manuscripts which Muñoz Sendino edited mistakenly name 'Abdamenef as Muhammad's father (p. 400; the earliest Latin manuscript, however, identifies him as his uncle.) The historian Matthew Paris (c. 1200-1259) makes the same error in his *Chronica majora* (vol. 3, p. 344).

Next, Alexandre du Pont's exemplum about God's justice in the case of a woodcutter, a knight who wrongly disinherited him, and a squire who loses the knight's purse and his own foot (vss. 219-84) is independent of the *Otia*. It is a version of a popular story about a master, his servant, and a poor man which originated in oral tradition of the East. The verse account resembles a tale in the Latin prose *Gesta Romanorum*, an anonymous late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth-century compilation of clerkly stories and exempla. The romance's version differs from tale 127 in the *Gesta Romanorum* in that the poor man who becomes rich is not identified as a woodcutter in the latter, and there is no mention of the knight's having disinherited him. The *Gesta Romanorum* offers its stories, which are accompanied by allegorical explanations, for use in preaching. The form of Alexandre du Pont's moral fiction, preceded and followed by religious lessons, seems appropriate for a sermon.

Thirdly, Alexandre du Pont includes in the public reading of laws allegedly written in the Koran an important item in verses 1531-42 that is absent from the *Otia*—*jihâd*, armed struggle against Islam's enemies. The romance poet's formulation of *jihâd*—the law is said to order the conquest and conversion of miscreants everywhere by the sword and the slaughter, imprisonment, ransoming, or enslavement of all men, women, and children who refuse to convert—has a textual basis in the Koran (see sura 2, titled "The Cow," versets 190-93; sura 8, "The Spoils of War," 57-75; sura 47, "War," 4.) But these harsh Koranic dic-

tates apply to idolaters and polytheists specifically, not to Christians or Jews, in Muhammad's time. Nevertheless, in the romance it would seem that Muhammad's people are all or mostly Christians before they become Muslims (see, for example, verses 728-32), and he vows to have put to death all but a very few Christians in his region who do not convert to his new religion. Although it is unnecessary to suppose a written source for the poet's misleading information on *jihād*, it might be noted that Peter the Venerable follows the *Apology of al-Kindī*, which he had Peter of Toledo translate, when he cites the Koran as sure evidence of Muhammad's bestial, satanic cruelty in that he wanted to bring about conversion only by the sword and preferred to slaughter Christians rather than reason with them (*Liber contra sectam sive hæresim Saracenorum* 1.9-10).

Then, the romance's description of the Prophet's Meccan tomb (he was in fact interred in Medina) contains two marvelous elements not present in the *Otia*: the tomb is illuminated by two inextinguishable candles that have burned since Christ's birth and by a crystal lamp that uses no oil (vss. 1916-51). The two candles, as well as a third, similar one that the poet locates in Constantinople at what must be Hagia Sophia, reappear in three later French works (see the note to verse 1929.) There are many reports on the two everlasting candles at the Meccan tomb in earlier Old French literature—e.g., in Richard le Pèlerin's epic poem *La chanson d'Antioche* from the first half of the twelfth century (5.804 and 8.1416-18). Alexandre du Pont is the first to write of the third candle. The lamp, a Meccan marvel unique to this romance, is illuminated from the outside by means of a carbuncle or a pyrope, a gem mentioned nowhere else in Old French that the poet may have found in a Latin lapidary such as Marbodius' *De gemmis* from the early twelfth century (see the note to verse 1942.) Nonetheless, somewhat similar lamps with exotic associations appear in earlier French literature. For instance, marvelous carbuncle and gold lamps that use no oil illuminate the palaces of Prester John, a legendary Christian king in Asia, according to the Latin and vernacular versions of *The Letter of Prester John* from the twelfth century (see the Old French *Lettre du Prêtre Jean*, verses 663 ff. and 1023 ff.); and carbuncles, along with lanterns, light a Muslim flotilla at night in *La chanson de Roland* (vss. 2630-45). One might note that Muhammad's tomb in Medina was

completely destroyed by fire in 1256.

Lastly, the romance repeats the *Otia*'s account of an unnamed, saintly hermit to whom Muhammad declares that he will put all Christians to death: in exchange for Muhammad's promise to preserve in small part the Christian religion in the region by sparing him and his disciples, the hermit agrees to lie to Khadījah, who trusts him; he will assure her that what she observes to be her husband's epileptic seizures are instead the effects of the descent of the angel Gabriel upon him. Perhaps the monk's decision to confirm his enemy's prophethood in this manner is influenced by Muhammad's suggestion that with God's help, great Christian peoples will issue from those few who remain. Alexandre du Pont asserts that his source lies and wrongly approves of the recluse's action here (vss. 1158-67):

According to my source,
I ought to praise him for this.
Nevertheless, I truly believe
That the source lies to me
About his helping to substantiate
For the deceitful Muhammad
The angel's coming to him
When the vile sickness seized him
And his establishment of a new religion
On behalf of God.

One might suppose that the romance poet finds implausible or reprehensible the spiritual cowardice of the hitherto pious monk who prophesied earlier that Muhammad would do the greatest damage to the Church. Commenting on this passage, Y. Lepage, the romance's most recent editor, argues that Alexandre du Pont failed to understand that the hermit's consenting to do evil—to support the foundation of a false religion inimical to Christianity—is justifiable in the circumstances, given the threat of Christianity's extinction; the monk's consent is, moreover, absolutely necessary to the narration itself, which cannot proceed unless he confirms Muhammad's prophethood (*Roman*, p. 221). We propose, however, another interpretation of the romance poet's accusation: he calls his source to account because he recognizes that its portrayal of the pious, innocent recluse, friend of the Church and Muhammad's enemy, diverges radically from Christian oral tradition and contradicts the testimony of several Latin writings from around

Gautier of Compiègne's time.

Gautier's representation of the guiltless, prophetic hermit differs essentially from contemporary and near-contemporary Latin portrayals of him as a Christian heretic who, under the devil's direction, teaches Muhammad false religious principles and promotes on his own initiative his protégé's prophethood to the detriment of the Church. Gautier gives to the hermit many of the positive qualities that early Islamic tradition attributed to three persons associated with Christianity who declared Muhammad to be a true prophet. Christian tradition and writers, however, regarded the same persons as associates of the devil or heretics of various stripes. In Gautier's poem, and then in Alexandre du Pont's adaptation, the Christian monk performs several functions with respect to Muhammad: first, the young Muhammad goes to him for instruction; the hermit immediately rebuffs him as the devil's slave and prophesies that he will do great damage to Christianity through the institution of a false religion, the tenets of which he outlines for the young man; a few years later, Muhammad, whom the devil makes prosper, reveals to the recluse that he will accomplish God's design by establishing a religion inimical to Christianity just as the hermit prophesied; then, under extreme duress, the monk supports Muhammad's lie to his wife about his visions in which Gabriel reveals God's will. The *Sîrat Rasûl Allâh* (*The Life of God's Messenger*) in Arabic, which Ibn Hishâm († c. 828) edited from the compilation by Ibn Ishâq († c. 768) of early Islamic reports about Muhammad, tells of three men associated with Christianity who confirmed Muhammad's status as a prophet: first, Bahîrâ, a monk in Syria, predicted that the boy Muhammad, who was with his uncle on a trading mission, would become a prophet; later, a second Syrian monk prophesied the same about the adult Muhammad; thirdly, Khadîjah's cousin Waraqa, a Christian, according to Ibn Ishâq, whom Jews and Christians had instructed in their religions and sacred texts, assured her and Muhammad that the latter's visions were authentic (pp. 79-83 and 107). Al-Tabarî (c. 839-923) repeats these and other Islamic reports in his history in Arabic (pp. 44-48 and 72-73). The limited scope of this introduction does not permit a comprehensive examination of the very numerous related accounts in medieval Christian writings (see d'Alverny, "La connaissance de l'Islam," d'Ancona, Daniel, Kritzeck, Lepage's introduction to the *Roman*,

and Tolan.) However, in order to measure the *Otia*'s deviation from Christian consensus of its time, we shall examine the conflation and radical transformation of Waraqa and the Syrian monks in four Latin works from the second half of the eleventh century through the middle of the twelfth. With the exception of Embrico of Mainz's fantastical poem which aims to entertain, these are serious works of history or religious polemic.

In his prose relation of the first crusade, the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, Guibert of Nogent (1052-1124) states that he derives his information on Muhammad from oral tradition. An unnamed Christian hermit in Egypt, whom Guibert associates with the heresy of Arianism, wanted to harm the Church which had rejected his candidacy for the patriarchate of Alexandria because of his heterodoxy. The devil described to him a young man whom he should find and instruct in his heresy. He recognized and taught Muhammad and arranged for him to marry while presenting him as a future prophet. Later he assured the wife that Muhammad was not an epileptic but a prophet. In the fifth of his prose *Dialogi*, Petrus Alfonsi (1062-after 1121), who relies heavily on the *Apology of al-Kindi*, speaks of an unnamed Jacobite heretic, an archdeacon condemned by a religious council in Antioch: he fled to his friend Muhammad, to whom he expounded his doctrine while two heterodox Jews also instructed Muhammad in theirs. The three teachers concocted a new religious code for him; they urged him to realize his desire to become king of the Arabs, who included idolaters and heretical Jacobites, Nestorians, and Jews, by proclaiming himself a prophet and subduing disbelievers by the sword. Peter the Venerable (c. 1092-1156) rejects the dubious stories circulating about Muhammad—for example, the tale that he was a Nicholaite heretic—and intends to report historical facts, which he derives in large part from the Latin versions of Theophanes' *Chronicle* and the *Apology*. In his prose *Summa totius hæresis Saracenorum*, he follows the *Apology* in noting that the devil sent Sergius, a Nestorian expelled from the Church, to Arabia, where he taught Muhammad the Scriptures according to his heresy while Jews instructed him in their doctrine (at one point, Peter proposes that Islam be considered the summation of heresies.) Peter says that Muhammad proclaimed his prophethood in order to become king. Finally, in one of Gautier's immediate sources, Embrico of Mainz's verse *Vita Mahumeti*

from the second half of the eleventh century or early twelfth, a wicked churchman, identified as a magus, is thwarted in his ambition to become patriarch of Jerusalem; he flees to Libya (a name for Africa in general), where he allies himself with the slave Muhammad, for whom he obtains by fraud and murder a rich widow as a wife, freedom, and the throne; he gives him a new religious code for his subjects, and he proclaims to them that their king's seizures are celestial raptures during which God confers with him.

Gautier of Compiègne agrees with Guibert of Nogent, Petrus Alfonsi, and Embrico of Mainz in maintaining that a Christian knew that Muhammad's prophethood was false yet supported it, but he disagrees with the same authors when he writes that the recluse gave his support only in order to save the Church in the region from annihilation. As for Muhammad's religious training, Gautier's poem alone maintains that the hermit who corresponds to the heretics in the other Latin works refused to instruct Muhammad. Only in the *Otia de Machomete* is the monk not a heretical Christian or an enemy of the Church, and only the *Otia's* hermit anathematizes Muhammad at their first meeting as the devil's servant and a pseudoprophet-to-be. One notes, however, that Gautier's prophetic recluse, while cursing the young man, reveals to him many heretical principles (vss. 154-72) which Muhammad will later propound as the basis of his new creed. In its peculiar way, Gautier of Compiègne's representation of the hermit agrees with the Christian goodness and true prophecies of the Syrian monks and with Waraqa's trustworthiness in the canonical Islamic reports mentioned above. Gautier of Compiègne in effect attributes to Muhammad the renegade's or magus' accursed qualities found in the other Latin accounts as an exceedingly ambitious, rejected heretic or enemy of the Church who promotes, with the devil's help, a false religion and prophet among the Arabs or neighboring peoples. Alexandre du Pont's allegation that his source lied about the monk is wholly substantiated by the authority of Christian writers on that subject. It is possible that his charge of misrepresentation comes from his reading of the *Apology of al-Kindī* in Peter of Toledo's translation, as noted earlier, and, also, the *Summa totius hæresis Saracenorum*, since both appear in early manuscripts of the so-called Toledan Collection, which was produced for and, in part, by Peter the Venerable in the early 1140s.

The *Otia de Machomete* and *The Romance of Muhammad* contain six main narrative or descriptive sections, most of which have sources or correspondences in part in twelfth-century and earlier Latin histories, Christian polemics, imaginative works, and translations. A listing of the sequence of sections, with notes on correspondences and sources, follows.

1. Muhammad's education and his first meeting with the recluse, *Otia* 22-78 and *Romance* 35-195

Besides their unorthodox characterization of the hermit as an orthodox believer, the *Otia* and the romance go against Christian tradition in indicating that Muhammad sought the recluse and that he was versed in Christian doctrine and writings before their first encounter. They do not tell how the poor bondman and trader acquired the thorough knowledge of the Scriptures—as well as the liberal arts—that they attribute to him. Still, the hermit provides the principles upon which the new religion will be founded, as in the Latin works just mentioned. The brief report on Muhammad in Theophanes' *Chronicle* says that he lived with Jews and Christians in Palestine where he traded, and he sought their sacred writings (p. 35). In the *Otia* and the romance, the bachelor Muhammad does business abroad before and after his first meeting with the hermit, but there is no mention of communication with foreign Christians or Jews.

For Muslims, Muhammad's lack of what might be termed formal training offers proof of the Koran's divine provenance, and the Koran 16.103 rejects allegations by his enemies in Mecca that he received instruction or the Koran itself from a foreigner (for other references in Islamic sources to a foreigner or Christian rumored to have taught Muhammad, see Ibn Ishâq, p. 180, and Kritzeck, p. 130.)

2. Courtship and marriage, *Otia* 79-400 and *Romance* 196-788

The trading mission abroad that Muhammad undertakes for his master (*Otia* 79-92 and *Romance* 196-218) is related retrospectively to his subsequent marriage proposal to the rich widow, who, he argues, needs a husband with his own proven success in business. But Islamic tradition reports that Khadijah hired Muhammad to trade abroad and proposed marriage to him soon after his return (Ibn Ishâq, p. 82).

The *Otia* and the romance, along with Guibert of Nogent's *Gesta Dei per Francos*, which do not name Khadījah, mention the demise of her husband, but the *Vita Mahumeti*'s magus kills him by treachery so that Muhammad can have his widow, fortune, and throne. As Lepage notes (*Roman*, p. 36), the magus in the *Vita Mahumeti* who convinces the widow to enfranchise her slave Muhammad and marry him corresponds in a general manner to the *Otia*'s and romance's barons who persuade her to do so. The imputation in the *Otia* and the romance that the poor Muhammad, wrongly identified as a bondman according to Christian tradition, married in order to enrich and advance himself is found, too, in Theophanes, the *Vita Mahumeti*, Guibert of Nogent, Petrus Alfonsi, and the *Chronicle* of Sigebert of Gembloux (c. 1030-1112).

3. Private declaration and confirmation of prophethood, *Otia* 401-656 and *Romance* 789-1215

The *Otia* and the romance are the only works in which Muhammad suffers an epileptic seizure at his wedding feast. Theophanes is the first to report that Muhammad lied to his wife in private about his visions of the archangel in order to excuse his epilepsy, and the chronicler adds that an unnamed monk assured Khadījah that her husband was a prophet, not an epileptic. The *Otia* and the romance follow Theophanes here but do not repeat his assertion that the monk was exiled for reason of false beliefs. As noted earlier, the hermit's confirmation of Muhammad's prophethood in the *Otia* and the romance both follows Christian oral and written tradition and alters it radically.

4. Public announcement and confirmation of prophethood, and the presentation of the written code, *Otia* 657-884 and *Romance* 1216-1584

Khadījah's announcement of Muhammad's divine revelations by which she bests the other boastful wives at her husband's court derives from Theophanes. In order to prove before his assembled people that he is a prophet, Muhammad stages two false miracles. First, he prays to God for a sign, and his people believe that they are witnesses to a miracle when he discovers a channel filled with milk and another with honey, both of which he constructed in secret earlier. The *Otia* gives the oldest evidence of this device, which may have been suggested by Islamic notions of paradise (Cambier, "L'épisode," p. 235). Vincent of

Beauvais repeats this trickery in his *Speculum historiale* 23.40 (composed between 1246 and 1253). As for the second sham miracle, a white bull which Muhammad reared clandestinely arrives bearing the Koran or, at least, the essence of his new code that earlier he placed between its horns, and it kneels before him. Among others, Guibert of Nogent and, later, Vincent of Beauvais report similar tales (the former, however, writes about a cow), and the *Vita Mahumeti* describes a bull-like monster with a poem attached to its horns that proclaims its subduer the lawful king. There is no written evidence in Latin earlier than Guibert of Nogent and the *Vita Mahumeti* of these bovine pseudoprodigies. The Arabic and Syriac versions of the anonymous *Apocalypse of Bahîrâ*, whose dates are uncertain, also refer to a Koran-bearing cow, but the Latin version does not. Furthermore, Petrus Alfonsi mentions a talking bull which declared Muhammad to be a prophet; the reference derives from the *Apology of al-Kindî* and, ultimately, Islamic oral tradition.

5. War with the Persians, *Otia* 885-1056 and *Romance* 1585-1874

The *Otia* invented the war in which the Persians, believing Muhammad to be in possession of their territory by fraud, invade his people's land, defeat their army, from which Muhammad is absent due to old age, and slay all but one of their warriors. Gautier of Compiègne perhaps got the idea for this fictional war from Anastasius Bibliothecarius' translation of Theophanes for *annus mundi* 6123, or 631-632 A.D. Anastasius mentions consecutively, without transition, the Muslims, then three separate conflicts involving either Muslims or Persians, but not both in the same conflict. Details in Anastasius' rendering which are comparable to events in the fictional war include an uprising of the Persians, the defeat of the Persians—the phrase *in Persarum victoria*, “upon the victory over the Persians,” could also be read as “upon the victory of the Persians”—and a defeat of the Muslims so devastating that only one of their four amirs escaped slaughter. (For Renaissance historians' inaccurate reports about Muhammad at war with Persia based on their misinterpretation of Theophanes, see E. Cerulli, *Nuove ricerche*, pp. 270-76.) The *Otia* invented, too, the third sham miracle that Muhammad stages after the battle when he pretends to discover, through God's grace, all his slain vassals' riches which he concealed

earlier and now returns to their families. Some scholars have judged that the poets' Muhammad acts cowardly in refusing to participate in the battle or that by Machiavellian design, he instigates the war in order to gain absolute authority through the elimination of the most powerful pre-Islamic males in his land (*Roman*, ed. Lepage, pp. 79 and 223-24). However, it must be noted that before the fight, Muhammad alone pleads that his people sue for peace—he rightly judges their army to be no match for the Persians—and before and after the war, the poets attribute his people's peace and prosperity to his leadership (*Otia* 885-86 and 1055-56, *Romance* 1585-87 and 1864-1874). In any event, since Theophanes' and his translator's record here is for the year of Muhammad's death, speculation on the fictional character's motives or the reason for his absence from the conflict seems moot.

6. Muhammad's death and his tomb, *Otia* 1057-76 and *Romance* 1875-1955

In limiting themselves to a note in passing on Muhammad's death from what would seem to be natural causes, Gautier of Compiègne and Alexandre du Pont disregard the popular legends, with which they were doubtless familiar, that imagined the ignominious, violent end recounted by Guibert of Nogent and Embrico of Mainz—pigs tore him apart during one of his seizures—or variations, common in French epics, with dogs, a sow, or wild beasts and the Prophet in a drunken stupor. The Latin and French poems repeat the traditional error, however, that Muhammad was laid to rest in Mecca. The source for the description of Muhammad's tomb with his iron coffin suspended in midair by means of magnetic stone is the *Vita Mahumeti*, which gives the first written evidence of this particular marvel (see Eckhardt.)

Obviously, the original informant in Gautier of Compiègne's listing of sources, a convert from a Muslim family who "acknowledged to have learned through reading as a youth everything that books say about Muhammad" (*Otia* 19-20), did not read in Muslim accounts about the Prophet's hypocrisy and chicanery reported in the *Otia*. Many items in the sections given above correspond to what Theophanes and his translator note in their concise records—Muhammad's firsthand knowledge of the Scriptures, his marrying in order to advance himself, his epilepsy and its direct relationship to his pretended prophetic visions, the monk

who assures Khadjjah about her husband's prophethood, her public boast, and details in the *Chronicle* about the Persians or Muslims at war that reappear in altered form in the *Otia*. The *Otia*'s bull with the Koran or some part of it between its horns comes from Guibert of Nogent or the *Vita Mahumeti*, the latter of which is the source for the *Otia*'s aerial coffin. Further, it is impossible for the original informant to have read all about Muhammad's wrongdoing in Christian writings, since several particulars of his reading about which Gautier allegedly heard are in fact Gautier's inventions. One must conclude that the former-Muslim informant is a fiction in line with the notion of *translatio studii*, that the *Otia*'s textual genealogy is an appeal to the authority of an imaginary tradition, and that Gautier himself read some Latin Christian works on Muhammad.

As for *The Romance of Muhammad*, the survival of a single, late-thirteenth-century manuscript copy and references in three little-known French texts of that time or later to what are possibly the romance's three marvelous candles would not lead one to believe that it had a large popular audience. One might conjecture that contemporary French lay hearers or readers found the romance's subject to be new and different from what other vernacular sources reported about the Prophet of Islam, but they may not have found it, or the poet's adaptation, wholly suitable for the romance genre. In spite of Alexandre du Pont's attempts at adapting the social, literary, and even geographical context of his subject matter for an audience familiar with French epic and romance, he does not succeed in transforming the essentially clerkish character of the *Otia*, where Old and New Testament stories abound—in fact, he often amplifies such narratives. As the principal subject of a romance, the poet's antiheroic pseudoprophet surely does not provide per se the high degree of narrative interest offered, for example, by Renard the Fox, the popular antihero of French romance who shares many of Muhammad's traits here as an unscrupulous and smooth-tongued, but not entirely detestable, hypocrite and opportunist. Further, although Alexandre du Pont succeeds to some extent in making his source material relevant to a contemporary French public, the result remains far removed from the geographical location and, presumably, regional or even European concerns of his domestic audience. By way of comparison, we might mention one competing tradition whose popularity continued through the

fifteenth century perhaps because it brought Muhammad within the ambit of Western Christendom: often under the name of Nicholas, the Prophet or his malevolent mentor is a cardinal or other high Church official, sometimes an Italian, who converts pagan nations and, then, after his ascension to the papacy is thwarted, reconverts them to his new religion inimical to Christianity. Variations on this model appear in several Latin works, and similar reports are found in French and Italian fictions as early as the epic poem *Le couronnement de Louis* from 1130 or later (vss. 847-50; for other examples, see d'Ancona, pp. 245-74.) One might wonder if orally transmitted constructions of God's Messenger as a former Christian proselytizer or dignitary who brings about a schism within the Church—and himself—antedate by far Peter the Venerable's mention of the popular Nicholaite tale. A later literary refinement may be seen in the emblematic character of Muhammad among the "sowers of scandal and schism" in Dante's hell (*Inferno* 28.35) who, with his own hands, splits himself in two.

The English translation of *Li romans de Mahon* is based on the editions of the sole extant copy in MS. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 1553, folios 367 v^o-379 r^o. Notes to the translation include interpretations of the Old French text and references to Gautier of Compiègne's *Otia de Machomete*, other Latin and French works, and the Bible.

II. *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder*

The Book of Muhammad's Ladder (*Le livre de l'eschiele Mahomet*) consists of three main narrative parts: the Prophet's night journey in the company of the angel Gabriel from his home in Mecca to Jerusalem's Temple (the *isrâ'*, chapters 1-4), his ascent to heaven by means of a ladder (the *mi'râj*, or 'ladder,' chapters 5-79), and his return to Mecca, where he reveals what he saw to his relatives in the tribe of Quraysh (chapters 80-85). These happenings, narrated by Muhammad in the first person, took place in the eighth year after he began to prophesy, according to chapter 85, and some exegetes consider them among his miracles (Kritzeck, p. 126). Muslims celebrate the *mi'râj* on the evening before the 27th of Rajab, the seventh lunar month. The earliest reference to these events is in the Koran 17.1: "Praise Him Who traveled in one night with His servant from the Masjid al-Harâm"—the Ka'ba and area around it—"to the Masjid al-Aqsâ, the surroundings of which We blessed in order to show him Our signs." It is generally understood that 'He' and 'We' mean God here, and various interpretations have identified the Masjid al-Aqsâ as the Temple in Jerusalem, heaven, Medina, or a place near Mecca. The Koran 17.60 refers further to the *mi'râj* as a vision. Ibn Ishâq brings together several oral reports by Muhammad's relatives and contemporaries about these raptures (pp. 181-87). He notes that opinions differ as to whether the Prophet was transported in the flesh or only in spirit, but he—or his editor Ibn Hishâm—maintains that, in any event, the revelation itself is true, and it actually occurred (p. 183).

From among the numerous, later written accounts of Muhammad's raptures and the marvels that he saw during them, the Arabic original of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder*, known only in its European translations, is one of the most fully amplified and elaborated. The anonymous author was probably a Muslim, since he supports Islam unequivocally, and he appears to write for Muslims. He draws his material in small part from the Koran, which he cites or paraphrases and explains, as well as from Koranic commentaries, Muslim prayers, and canonical traditions about Muhammad's words and deeds, or *hadîth*. But for the most part, he compiles and elaborates on Muslim post-Koranic sources, some of which assimilated Jewish and Christian traditions, other night

journey and ascent narratives, various cosmologies and works on the otherworld, *hadīth* of doubtful authenticity, and popular tales which he joins in a continuous, chronological narration. There seems to be little that is original in the compilation. Most of its marvels and narrative events appear in virtually all other accounts of the *isrâ'* and *mi'râj*, even in anti-Islamic ones. For example, the anti-Islamic *Liber denudationis siue ostensionis aut patefaciens* (*The Book of Denuding or Exposing, or the Discloser*, also called *Contrarietas alfolica*) is an abridged Latin version from before 1299 of an anonymous, lost Christian tract in Arabic written, perhaps in Spain, between 1010 and 1132. The twelfth chapter of the *Liber denudationis* offers a very brief report of the Prophet's night journey and ascent which contains many wonders and story elements present in *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder*. Among them are al-Burâq, a fabulous beast bigger than an ass and smaller than a mule which carries Muhammad on his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and back; the rock at the Temple in Jerusalem from which Muhammad ascends to heaven; the question "Has he already been sent?" which is repeated each time that Gabriel introduces the Prophet to a spiritual being; the voyage through the different levels of the heavens and meetings with angels and Moses; Muhammad's face-to-face encounter in heaven with God, Who touches him with His hand; and his repeated negotiation, on the advice of Moses, with God about how many prayers Muslims must perform daily. However, an unusual feature of *Muhammad's Ladder* is that the work is cast from beginning to end as the spoken testimony of the Prophet.

In the concluding chapter, the recording of Muhammad's oral report is ascribed partly to his cousin Ibn 'Abbâs, a traditionist of early Islam who could not possibly have penned the document—here and occasionally elsewhere in *al-mi'râj* writings, his name serves to lend an air of authenticity to a spurious composition. It has been suggested that the now-lost Arabic book which served as the source for translations into European languages was made by compiling several relations for the express purpose of translation (*Le livre de l'échelle de Mahomet*, pp. 25-26). However, such a purpose seems unlikely. For example, the appeal to the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs, well-known to Muslims but not Western Christians, is almost certainly from the compiler's hand, and it points to an intended audience of Muslims.

The Latin and French versions of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* state that Alfonso X the Wise, king of Castile, commissioned his physician Abraham, a Jew, to translate an Arabic work called *al-mi'rāj* into Castilian and that Abraham divided his translation into chapters (for Abraham, see Roth, pp. 70-71.) The Castilian version is now lost. They also indicate that the king then commissioned Bonaventura da Siena, an Italian notary and secretary in his court, to render the Castilian text into Latin—according to the Latin version—and into French—according to the sole extant Old French copy. The French preface and colophon note that Bonaventura da Siena completed the French translation in 1264. Nevertheless, Jacques Monfrin has shown that the French text's attribution to Bonaventura da Siena and its statement that the Castilian, rather than the Latin, version is its immediate source are unfounded (pp. 286-89). The most recent editors of the Latin rendering believe that Bonaventura da Siena completed it slightly before the date given in the French text, which they ascribe, as does Monfrin, to an unknown translator working from the Latin (*Le livre de l'échelle de Mahomet*, pp. 22-25). Peter Wunderli argues that the Old French translator was a Provençal presumably in Alfonso the Wise's service, and he dates the French work soon after 1264 (*Le livre de l'eschiele Mahomet*, pp. 20-24). Therefore, although scholars generally agree that the French version derived directly from the Latin one and that it was completed in or near 1264, they reject its attribution to Bonaventura da Siena. Moreover, the king's commission with respect to the French rendering is questionable. One might note that among the very numerous translations from Arabic which Alfonso the Wise ordered (see O'Callaghan, pp. 141-44), *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* is the only work for which he is said, according to the sole testimony of the Old French version, to have commissioned a French translation.

The production of three translations of a Muslim religious text at that time requires an explanation, as do Alfonso the Wise's possible interests in *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder*. The rendering of this particular Arabic work into European languages extends the translation project that Peter the Venerable directed in Toledo in the mid twelfth century—that is, the Toledan Collection, which includes Latin versions of the Koran and Arabic writings on Muhammad and his doctrines that several translators produced for Peter the Venerable, who intended

thereby to furnish Christians, especially churchmen, with firsthand information on Islam and its 'errors.' Indeed, the two surviving Latin copies of *Muhammad's Ladder* appear in fourteenth-century manuscripts which contain this collection. One might understand the propagandistic aims of the translations in the Toledan Collection and the European versions of *Muhammad's Ladder* to be somewhat similar: while serving to disseminate among Christians a direct knowledge of Islam based on a selection of seemingly reliable Arabic texts, they are meant further, as efforts parallel to military and religious campaigns abroad, to counter and discredit Muslim authority primarily on the Christian home front.

Although dual translation from Arabic into a vernacular language and then into Latin is not uncommon (see d'Alverny, "Les traductions à deux interprètes"), the production of Castilian, Latin, and finally French versions of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* is exceptional. This unusual literary occurrence may be explained in part by the Arabic work's exceptional authority, which would seem almost to equal that of the Koran: the Arabic account has as its principal narrator Muhammad himself, and its chain of transmission is authenticated in chapter 85 by Abû Bakr, Muhammad's successor, and Ibn 'Abbâs, both of whom swear to have recorded the Prophet's true testimony exactly as he told it to them (Ibn 'Abbâs, however, was quite possibly not yet born when Muhammad is said here to have directed him and Abû Bakr to put the oral report in writing.) It seems reasonable to suppose that many or even most Christian readers of this time, who were presumably unfamiliar with early Islamic history and writings, would have viewed the written account as one of the chief documents of Islam, and in all likelihood they would have thought it to be genuine, as the Latin and French translators apparently did (see the prefatory chapter.) Moreover, the same readers would almost surely not have realized that some points in the book which appeared to them to be 'errors' would seem no less so to literate Muslims—an extreme example, the narration of Muhammad's receipt of the Koran from God's hand in heaven contradicts the Koran (see chapter 49, note 64.) One might guess that the person or persons who ordered these translations expected the seemingly reliable authority of the book, in combination with what the French preface qualifies as "the errors and unbelievable things" that Muhammad recounts in it, to bring Islamic authority in general into disrepute.

Although medieval Western, non-Muslim readers might easily mistake *Muhammad's Ladder* for the genuine document that it declares itself to be, such is not the case with Muslim readers. Islamic theologians and scholars give little or no credit to the popular tradition of *al-mi'râj* accounts, like the present book, which derive in large part from sources—to say nothing of abundant artistic imagination!—other than the canonical record of Muhammad's life and words. Informed Muslims of any period would recognize *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* for the most part as pious popular fiction worthy of believers' respect for its piety, but not of their credence.

The Castilian and French versions point to an audience beyond the Latin-learned clerics whom Peter the Venerable attempted to reach. Although Alfonso the Wise and whoever commissioned the French translation clearly intended to provide vernacular readers with firsthand information on Islamic beliefs, it seems unlikely that they could have imagined that *Muhammad's Ladder* or its readers would play any part in converting Muslims. The Old French preface, modeled after the Latin, states the following as one aim of the translation:

... so that people may learn about Muhammad's life and knowledge and so that after they have heard and become acquainted with the errors and unbelievable things that he recounts in this book, the legitimate Christian religion and truth which is in [Christ] will thus be more fitting and pleasing to embrace and keep to for all those who are good Christians.

Since this statement of intent originates in Bonaventura da Siena's Latin preface, possibly it reflects an aim of the king who commissioned his rendering. It is worth noting that the range of intent does not extend beyond good Christians. By strengthening the Christian faith of Castilian and French readers, the sponsor or sponsors of the vernacular versions perhaps hoped to fortify them against yielding in any way to Islam in this period of very frequent contacts—and conflicts—with the Muslim world. Clerics would of course be targeted especially by the Latin translation, and their assumed role is to maintain the faith of lay believers. The implication here is that for Christian readers, the translations prove the exclusive truth of their faith.

In consideration of the religious objective expressed in the Old French and Latin prefaces, the translations are problematic, since they

reproduce, with virtually no Christian commentary or adaptation, a text that confirms Muhammad's prophethood unreservedly and glorifies him. Further, the book finds fault with Christians—chapter 70, for example, laughs at their supposedly innate arrogance—and with Jews. How could literal, uncommented translations of an Arabic work that serves to support the Muslim faith serve also to demonstrate to Christian readers the self-evident absurdity of that same faith? One might propose at least two answers. If the spiritual account of Muhammad's night journey and ascent is read literally, its truthfulness can be accepted on the basis of faith, but not of reason or experience. The declaration in the Koran 17.60 that God sent Muhammad this otherworldly vision as a test to men probably means to indicate a test of their faith. In chapter 82, some of the Muhammad's kinsmen in Mecca to whom he relates his revelations reject as lies everything that he says because it is physically impossible:

You wish to have us understand thereby that in a single night you went to the Temple in Jerusalem and saw everything that is within it and, afterwards, you saw all the heavens and all the lands and celestial gardens and regions of hell! ... And we know indeed that it is at the very least a month's journey from here all the way to the said temple! How, then, do you expect us to believe you regarding anything that you recounted to us?

Medieval Muslim commentators sometimes provided allegorical interpretations of the *isrâ'* and *mi'râj*, such as the 'rationalist' explanation in the Persian *Book of the Prophet Muhammad's Ascent to Heaven* by the philosopher Avicenna (980-1037; see the translation by Peter Heath, who lists other spiritual exegeses on pp. 109 and 138-39.) However, *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* exemplifies the more common tendency of Islamic commentators to interpret literally, rather than metaphorically, the Prophet's visions and the Koran's descriptions of heaven's delights and the pains of hell. For example, the good of paradise is imagined and catalogued here as all the choicest possessions and greatest pleasures of the senses. Thus, the thoroughly material, sensual representation of the afterlife in *Muhammad's Ladder* would appear to confirm the particular argument sometimes put forth by medieval Christian polemists that Islam is grossly materialistic and hardly spiritual. Further, the literal translations without commentary on their many

seemingly fantastic elements would lead most medieval Christians, as with Muhammad's kinsmen mentioned above, to the conclusion that the account is literally impossible and, hence, mendacious or nonsensical.

Moreover, the translations' target audiences of Christians would find absurd or erroneous a good number of prominent beliefs and events in *Muhammad's Ladder*. One might cite as examples Muhammad's face-to-face interviews with God in heaven (chapters 20 and 49-51), his prerogative of interceding on behalf of his followers on Judgment Day (chapter 78), the death of angels (chapter 7), the resurrection and Final Judgment of animals (chapter 21), Muhammad's assertion that God created eighteen thousand worlds like our own (chapter 26), God as the creator of evil and error in mankind (chapter 70), and, of course, God's love of Muhammad and his followers above all peoples and the favored places that He has reserved for them in paradise. It might be supposed that medieval Christian readers would find these and other religious 'errors' in *Muhammad's Ladder* to be self-evident, not in need of commentary on the translators' part to underline their heterodoxy, and that given the apparent authority of the text, they would judge all of Muhammad's revelations presented here to be nonsense.

The early part of the present century saw the beginnings of a lively scholarly debate about whether Dante's *Divine Comedy* was inspired by accounts of Muhammad's journey to the otherworld and Islamic eschatology in general. Miguel Asín Palacios, who pointed out a good number of resemblances between such accounts and *The Divine Comedy*, argued that Dante's poem was in part a response to the former. The literary debate, in which the conflicting positions might seem at times to imply underlying national or cultural stakes, was inconclusive. The publication in 1949 of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* in two separate editions of both the Old French and Latin versions drew scholarly attention particularly to this important work as a possible source of *The Divine Comedy*. As Enrico Cerulli has noted, the diffusion of the Latin and Old French manuscripts and several instances of adaptation of the Castilian version are evidence that this narrative of Muhammad's night journey and ascent was known in a good part of Western European in

the second half of the thirteenth century (*Il libro della scala*, p. 12). Scholarly speculation on correspondences between *Muhammad's Ladder* and *The Divine Comedy* continues today, and the opinion that the Muslim revelation influenced the composition of the Italian poem in some way seems to prevail in recent literary histories. For example, Maria Rosa Menocal proposes that Dante composed his poem as a Catholic counter-text to *Muhammad's Ladder* (pp. 127-30; see, also, Burns, p. 9.) Nevertheless, although Dante may have had knowledge, direct or indirect, of this Arabic book in translation, examinations of similarities between it and *The Divine Comedy*, such as the detailed comparison which Cerulli undertakes (*Il libro della scala*, pp. 525-50), do not permit one to conclude definitively that *Muhammad's Ladder* influenced Dante's poem in any significant manner. Rather than dealing further with the broad and vexed question of Dante and other authors as possible readers of *Muhammad's Ladder*, we propose addressing another problem of readership: the Muslim narrative's literary genre as a factor greatly facilitating Christians' reception and comprehension of the uncommented translations. We would like to note, within the limited scope of this introduction, several conventions and commonplaces of the apocalyptic genre in medieval Christian narratives that have counterparts in *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder*. The Christian apocalyptic corpus provides the translations' medieval readers with a ready generic frame of reference for the Muslim prophetic narrative and, also, a common source of information on its chief subjects, the otherworld and the Last Judgment. We suggest that these readers' familiarity with Christian apocalypses would have caused them to recognize—whether or not they were looking for them—many striking parallels and dissimilarities in *Muhammad's Ladder*; further, the book's agreement, or lack of it, with the Christian apocalyptic genre and the otherworldly information that it provides makes adaptation and commentary largely unnecessary with respect to the translations' target audiences. The characteristics of the genre which Eileen Gardiner outlines in the introduction to her anthology of Christian revelations, *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante*, will serve as a basis for comparison.

The genre of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* is the apocalypse, or a revelation in the form of a narrated vision. In all the Christian stories about heaven and hell that Gardiner edited, the vision is reported or

recorded by a person or character different from the one who experiences it (pp. xxii-xxiii). Chapter 85 of *Muhammad's Ladder* tells how Muhammad's vision became a text: his kinsmen in Mecca asked him to have his oral relation of the night journey and ascent written down so that they could report and explain it to all peoples, and he entrusted Abû Bakr and Ibn 'Abbâs with putting it and any subsequent revelations in writing. The chapter ends with the two recorders' testimony as to the truth of the vision and the trustworthiness of the text itself. As Gardiner also points out, in order to persuade readers that the visions recorded actually occurred and, thus, the texts are not literary works of imagination, authors of Christian apocalypses employed conventions or formulae "to establish a connection between what was seen in the otherworld and something concrete in this world" (p. xxiv). As proof of the authenticity of the *isrâ'* and *mi'râj*, chapters 83 and 84 relate an elaborate anecdote about Muhammad's subsequent, God-given vision of a caravan en route from Jerusalem (cf. a different vision of a caravan that serves the same end in Ibn Ishâq, p. 184.) This anecdote about a common camel train, connected in narrative function but not in content to the primary subjects in *Muhammad's Ladder*, offers a parallel example of the conventional processes of verification found in Christian apocalyptic writings. Besides these two conventions relative to the recording and verification of a visionary experience, Gardiner notes the typical insistence upon God's purpose in granting it, which is in most cases so that the visionary will report to others exactly what he saw as a guide to their salvation (pp. xx-xxi). In *Muhammad's Ladder*, God informs His Apostle of this same purpose, as Gabriel also does twice. Other elements common to many Christian apocalyptic writings include the vision's narrative development as a journey and, also, the presence of an otherworldly guide who explains the significance of the places visited (pp. xv-xvi). *Muhammad's Ladder* combines two separate visionary journeys, the *isrâ'* and *mi'râj* (see an early combined version in Ibn Ishâq, pp. 184-85), and the guide Gabriel's explanations make up a large part of the book. Muhammad's narrative role in relation to Gabriel is generally that of questioner, and in many cases—e.g., in regard to Judgment Day and the substructure holding heaven, earth, and hell in place—Gabriel describes in detail and at length beings, things, places, and events that Muhammad does not or cannot see.

The physical descriptions of heaven and hell in *Muhammad's Ladder* present many details that are commonplace in Christian revelations. For instance, hell's pit, its black fire, torments, demons, sharp implements of torture, noxious odors, and beasts and venomous serpents which assault sinners (Gardiner, pp. xvii-xviii) are featured in *Muhammad's Ladder* along with the different place and type of punishment for each major sin that figure in the more elaborate Christian works of this genre. Chapters 76-78 describe Azirat (as-Sirât), a bridge which will appear high over hell on Judgment Day and which all but the perfectly guiltless must attempt to cross: those who succeed in crossing the extremely narrow bridge studded with iron hooks and pincers arrive in paradise above, and those who fail fall into hell's fire. Similar descriptions of a bridge of judgment, which is perhaps of Persian origin, appear in four late-sixth through early-thirteenth-century Christian revelations (see Gardiner, pp. 48-49, 142-43, 157-58, 162-63, 168, 222-23, and 232.) Chapter 78 refers to different periods, extending from one day and night to twenty-five thousand years, of purgation or punishment by fire on Azirat Bridge for those meriting salvation before they may enter paradise. In Christian revelations, a separate region between hell and heaven, a precursor of purgatory, where souls awaiting admission to paradise suffer is first mentioned in the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England* from 731 (LeGoff, *La naissance*, pp. 155-58). The representation in *Muhammad's Ladder* of heaven's walls, buildings, and four angels with six wings and four different sorts of features who are incorporated in God's throne resembles in part descriptions in the Apocalypse of John 4.6-9 and 21.10-27 that Christian revelations commonly imitated. The depiction of natural areas in heaven which include gardens, fields, trees, fruits, springs, and such in *Muhammad's Ladder* has counterparts in Christian apocalyptic descriptions deriving from biblical Eden, classical *loci amœni*, and the Elysian Fields (pp. xviii-xix). Further, Gardiner notes that the visionary ascends through a hierarchy of souls and spiritual beings in Christian revelations of heaven. In *Muhammad's Ladder* the Prophet ascends through many grades of biblical personages, beginning with Christ, whom Islam considers to be prophets or bearers of divine law; this ranking leads, as in Christian works, up to God. *Muhammad's Ladder* diverges from Christian apocalypses, however, when God speaks with Muhammad in heaven and

touches him—in only one Christian revelation does the visionary see God in the person of Christ (p. xix). This divergence is, of course, partly in line with God's speaking to Abraham, Moses, and others on earth in the Jewish Scriptures, and the face-to-face meeting of God and His Prophet is a common element in *al-mi'râj* accounts, as in the *Liber denudationis* (pp. 380-81). Finally, the ladder extending from the earth to heaven appears in Christian writings as early as the third-century vision of Saint Perpetua (*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 33; cf. Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28.12.)

From the foregoing, summary comparison, one might conjecture that the translations' readers in the second half of the thirteenth century who were acquainted with some of the numerous Christian apocalyptic writings or, perhaps, oral accounts would have recognized in *Muhammad's Ladder* many familiar elements in regard to narrative structures and strategies and the description of the otherworld. The correspondences between *Muhammad's Ladder* and Christian revelations may account in part for the unusual character of the Old French and Latin versions as examples of medieval European translation practice in that they include very few instances of commentaries attributable to the translators, and cases of adaptation of the Arabic source text, via the Castilian rendering, to the target audiences' culture are most rare—e.g., a reference in chapter 76 to Lent in order to resituate culturally Ramadân. The absence in the translations of commentary on such features as the bridge of judgment, varying periods of affliction or purgation for those unworthy of entering paradise immediately, the detailed descriptions of heaven and hell, and the complex narrative relationship between Gabriel and Muhammad may be due to the translators' presumption that Western Christian readers recognized them. On the other hand, one might imagine that precisely because of the easily recognizable similarities between Christian revelations and this compilation of Islamic otherworldly visions, the same readers would have found the frequent, radical disagreement with Christian apocalyptic commonplaces and conventions in *Muhammad's Ladder* to be extremely jarring indications of self-evident 'errors.' Among the most obvious cases are Christ's lowest rank in heaven and his absence from the Final Judgment, where Muhammad plays a key role; the utter immodesty of the visionary's vision of himself (this immodesty is only slightly attenuated by the narrative strategy

of placing the oft-repeated, superlative praise of the Prophet in the mouths of otherworldly characters); and the five hundred voluptuous wives and four thousand virgins assigned to the least-favored Muslim male in paradise. As for this last instance, the enormous exaggeration in Peter the Venerable's *Summa totius hæresis Saracenorum* that Muhammad allowed his followers to have eighteen wives and more seems comparatively piddling evidence of supposedly authorized lasciviousness in Islam.

The comprehensive description of the otherworld, the arrangement of its parts, and its substructure in relation to the earth in *Muhammad's Ladder* requires elucidation, since the work presents the places and marvels that Muhammad hears about or observes in ways that are sometimes incomplete, disconnected, or contradictory. First, the ladder. It leads up to the first heaven's gates from the Temple of Jerusalem in *Muhammad's Ladder*. Another Islamic tradition reports, however, that Muhammad ascended from the sanctuary enclosure in Mecca. In any event, the ascension into the otherworld leads from one of two Muslim most holy places (Muhammad's rebuilt tomb in Medina is the third.) While ascending, Muhammad first encounters in midair the Angel of Death, a meeting that signals his passage into the world-after-life (according to a thirdhand report in Ibn Ishâq, p. 185, Muhammad said that just before dying, a person sees the ladder.) Then he observes, in succession, three singular angels whom he sees later or hears about in heaven. The first has a rooster's shape, and Muhammad sees him again in the seventh heaven, where he serves as a sort of muezzin (chapter 29). The second angel, composed half of snow and half of fire, represents the unity of spirit among believers, and Muhammad sees him again in the seventh heaven. The third, marvelously large angel is probably Arçaniel, or Razqâ'il, subsequently identified as the companion of the Angel of Death (chapter 68); he supports the lowest level of hell and everything above it on his shoulders. Finally, Muhammad encounters the guardian of hell before he reaches the first heaven's gates. The heavens are arranged one above the other, and in passing from heaven to heaven, Muhammad moves vertically through the enormous spaces that separate them. There is, however, no mention of the ladder or similar devices

between one heaven and the next. One might note that in the *Liber denudationis*, there is no ladder at all, and Gabriel carries the Prophet to heaven (pp. 378-79).

The Koran 2.29 mentions seven heavens, but they number eight here. The heavens are of equal thickness and unspecified breadth and shape, and they have individual substructures that separate them at equal distances. Numbered in ascending order, the eight heavens are each inhabited by angels and one or two principal spiritual persons: in the first heaven, composed of iron and called the heaven of the moon, Muhammad encounters Jesus Christ and John the Baptist; in the second, of copper, he meets Joseph, son of Jacob; in the third, of silver, Enoch and Elijah; in the fourth, of gold, Aaron; in the fifth, of pearl, Moses; in the sixth, of emerald, Abraham; in the seventh, of ruby, Adam; and in the eighth, of topaz, God on His throne, which four angels bear on their shoulders (cf. the different arrangement of the principal spirits in Ibn Ishâq, p. 186.) Ranks of angels whose feet pass all the way down to the 'sterile wind' at the bottom of the universe hold up the eighth heaven. Among the other angels who serve in the heavens, one might note the armies of horse-faced ones, commanded by Gabriel, in the sixth. In the seventh heaven Muhammad visits seven gardens or paradises which offer varying degrees of celestial delight corresponding to the merit of the saved who inhabit them. Each garden provides angelic servants, nourishment, clothing, camels, individual residences, and a very great number of wives, concubines, and handmaids for every one of the worthy men (the narrators are silent on the heavenly reward of meritorious women.) The separate gardens are located on different levels, since the text alludes to the highest and lowest paradises. The seventh, highest garden serves as God's residence when He descends from the eighth heaven to converse with the gardens' inhabitants. The seventh heaven also contains a separate, enclosed white region that God has reserved for Himself—it is perhaps the same white region mentioned in chapter 66 to which He will order His throne to be moved on Judgment Day so that He may reveal Himself to all. The fifth garden or paradise is the most noble, and God set it aside for the Prophet's future enjoyment. Before describing hell to Muhammad, Gabriel leads him into what chapter 53 identifies as a lower garden (the chapter title says, however, that it is the lowest), which stands above the air that separates

it from hell a relatively short distance below. This garden appears to be in or near the first heaven, but other, ambiguous indications in chapters 54 and 63 might be mistaken to mean that the angel has led him to earth.

On Judgment Day, Azirat Bridge will stand in the air between heaven and hell. It comprises seven successive bridges or spans, the first of which leads from an unidentified place (earth?), and the last, into paradise.

Numbered in descending order and arranged vertically, the seven regions of hell consist entirely of fire. They are separated from one another by the arms of an ocean of fire, which also separates them from a great fiery pit. On Judgment Day, this pit will be opened, and its fire will consume all of hell and the ocean of fire. (Chapter 75 indicates that heaven and earth will then be exchanged for new ones—presumably, so will hell.) Each region of hell holds a particular class of sinner: the first contains idolaters; the second, apostates; the third, those who amass wealth wrongfully and the nations of Gog and Magog (see Ezekiel 38.2, Apocalypse 20.7, and Koran 21.96); the fourth, gamblers, the wrathful, and blasphemers; the fifth, those who do not pray as they ought or give alms; the sixth, disbelievers; and the seventh, those who use weights and measures fraudulently. Punishment for other sorts of sins is administered in unspecified areas. Muhammad recognizes among these ‘miscellaneous’ damned certain of his rich Meccan acquaintances who wronged the common people. In the sixth region is the register of all sins committed, and the seventh contains the chained devil, his seat, castle, and armies.

Given the narration of Muhammad’s ascent from Jerusalem past the angel who bears hell on his shoulders and, then, hell’s guardian just below heaven’s gates, it might seem that the separate, vertically distributed constructions of heaven and hell stand above the earth. But since the distance between the first heaven and earth is said to equal a 663 years’ journey (chapter 32) and hell’s vertical dimension equals a journey of 1,930 years or much more (chapters 64, 69, and 71), obviously hell cannot fit between heaven and earth. Some Muslim and Jewish cosmologies present a model of the universe with several, superimposed heavens above seven regions or stacked disks of the earth, of which the lower regions contain hell (see, e.g., the excerpts from an

eleventh-century Arabic work by al-Tha‘labī in *Le livre de l’échelle*, pp. 356–66.) In *Muhammad’s Ladder*, references in chapters 54 and 69 locate the earth directly above hell’s seven regions and, therefore, point to an eight-tiered model of earth and hell. But elsewhere, allusions to the earth’s relative position are ambiguous or misleading, as in the narration of Muhammad’s ascent, and sometimes the compiler’s treatment of his earth-and-hell model lacks coherence. Chapter 62, for example, describes hell’s substructure as a system or chain of vertically arranged bearers that other cosmologies say hold up the earth—the application here to hell of a system of support and stabilization clearly intended for the well-being and comfort of the earth’s inhabitants, not hell’s, results in incoherence. In chapters 54, 60, 62, 63, 68, and 69, Gabriel gives different and, often, contradictory descriptions of the foundations beneath hell. According to chapters 68 and 69, which give the most complete account, hell’s seventh, lowest region rests on the shoulders and hands of the angel Arçaniel, and he straddles the bull Beamut, which stands on a green stone surrounded above and below by Kaf, or Qâf, Mountain. The green stone must be the block or peg said to support the earth in various cosmologies, and Kaf is the inaccessible mountain range believed to girdle the earth and hold its lands and seas together. Beneath Kaf lies air, then darkness. Below them, the ‘sterile wind’ surrounds the fish Leviazan, whose back supports Arçaniel’s feet. Finally, the fish rests upon a body of water. Chapter 54, however, reports both that the angel, standing on the fish, holds up the green stone in his palm and that a fish joined head-to-tail supports a stone; and in chapters 62 and 63, the angel stands on the green stone resting on the shoulders of the bull which stands on the fish surrounded by Kaf. The common elements incorporated in these contradictory accounts—the angel, the stone, Kaf, the bull, the fish—are all bearers or stabilizers of the earth that many different cosmologies identify individually or in diverse combinations. It is apparent that just as the author of *Muhammad’s Ladder* brought together, without much concern for consistency, a great variety of reports on Muhammad and beliefs about Judgment Day and the after-life, so too he combined cosmological models from various sources.

According to chapter 69, Kaf serves a further substructural function: seventeen of its peaks sustain the heavens, independent of hell’s support system, and maintain the space that separates one heaven from the next.

In view of these extensive explanations concerning the structure and substructure of heaven, earth, and hell, it is possible that Alfonso the Wise's interest in *Muhammad's Ladder* derived in part from them, since most of the numerous translations from Arabic that he is known to have ordered were of scientific and pseudoscientific works.

Some comments on the mystical and prophetic character of language and discourse in *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* and on the English translation will conclude this introduction. The mode of expression in the religious work is often more repetitive and formulaic, even ritualistic, than narrative or descriptive, and the different narrators produce numerous prayers in Arabic and Koranic passages or paraphrases. Also, in regard to measurements of quantity, time, and space, the narrators repeat, sometimes with augmentative variations, many numbers of which the value is mystical rather than mathematical. For example, the frequently repeated numbers seven, seventy, seven thousand, and seventy thousand are related as symbols with transcendent or anagogical referents to such figures as the seventy times seven pardons in Matthew 18.22, the sevens in the Apocalypse—seven churches, candelabra, seals, etc.—the Babylonian captivity of seventy years in Jeremiah and Daniel, and the seventy-cubit chains that bind sinners in the Koran 69.32. These numbers and others often repeated in *Muhammad's Ladder* commonly appear in *al-mi'rāj* accounts. Chapters 69, 76, and 78 give vastly different measurements of Azirat's great length in units of time as perceived by those crossing it. But the enormous distances in time from a human or posthuman viewpoint seem infinitesimal from God's perspective, which Gabriel attempts to suggest in chapter 75. The description of the marvels that Muhammad sees or hears about is typically hyperbolic, in the incomparable range of size, intrinsic worth, and pleasing or unpleasant qualities, or frequently he qualifies them as ineffable or inconceivable. At times he withholds a revelation because God ordered him to be silent about it, and both he and Gabriel are often unable to name, specify, or describe a being, place, or measurement that only God knows. Writing about objects, qualities, space, and time that transcend this-worldly comparison, comprehension, or expression serves to underline, as a reflection on mystical writing, the inadequacy of the work's

language (or languages) for referring beyond itself. The inability of the narration's language to signify fully or accurately that to which it refers, other than itself, and, also, the discourse of silence and exclusiveness leave many areas of meaning and reference blank for readers. The Christians targeted by the translations of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* were certainly familiar with the sorts of prophetic and mystical language and discourse characteristic of the work, and one might imagine that they found it to be a counterfeit of 'true' mysticism and prophecy in this case.

The English translation is based on the editions of the only known Old French copy in MS. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laudensis Misc. 537, folios 1 r^o-51 v^o, from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The translation is literal, excepting the frequent omission of 'and' (*et*) and, usually, 'so' (*si*) when it occurs in such constructions as "when we arrived there, so we found angels." Also, the translation eliminates in large part the alternation of present and past tenses common in the French narrative, but it attempts to preserve the text's legal-sounding character which is perhaps attributable to the Latin style of the court notary Bonaventura da Siena. Brackets enclose a word or words necessary to complete the sense of a passage, corrections, parts of the Latin version omitted, probably by error, from the French, and transliterations of Arabic terms and names that correspond to the French version's forms. Transliterations in the text and footnotes come for the most part from Cerulli's notes in *Il libro della scala*.

[THE ROMANCE OF MUHAMMAD]

Concerning Muhammad

Whoever wants to hear or learn
About Muhammad's life
Can gain knowledge of it here.
 Within the French king's dominion 4
Of Burgundy, in Sens,
With a canon there once lived a cleric
Who had been a Muslim,
But he adopted the Christian faith: 8
He completely renounced Muhammad,
For he knew about all the deceit,
Trickery, and fraud
That Muhammad had practiced during his lifetime. 12
 He had been a cleric as a pagan,
And afterwards he was a Christian clergyman.
He related this deceit to his superior,
Who recounted it to an abbot in the town— 16
One named Gravier¹—
And he to Gautier,²
Who was a monk in his abbey.
Then the monk put it into verse; 20
He made a Latin book of it,
Whence Alexandre du Pont took
The subject matter from which he produced
And drew this little romance. 24
 As the said monk affirms,

¹ That is, Garnier—the *Otia*, vs. 5, gives Warnerius. Garnier, abbot of Marmoutier in 1137-1155, was earlier a monk at the same abbey with Gautier of Compiègne, who became prior of Saint-Martin-en-Vallée in 1131. The *Otia*, vs. 11, says that both were monks—i.e., before 1131—when Garnier told Gautier what the canon in Sens had related to him.

² Gautier of Compiègne—i.e., Walterius in the *Otia*.

The canon was named Adam,
 And the cleric was called Dieudonné,³
 Because he had given himself to God. 28
 He learned through writings
 About both Muhammad and his nature,
 How he had conducted himself
 And where his lineage had originated: 32
 His father was born in Idumæa;⁴
 His mother was born there, too.
 His father's name was Audimenef,⁵
 But I do not know his mother's name.⁶ 36
 He was fully acquainted with the religion of Jesus Christ
 Through instruction and written works.
 He was very learned in geometry,
 Music and astronomy, 40
 Grammar and arithmetic,
 Logic and rhetoric.
 Through geometry he could find,
 If he wished, how many feet there are 44
 Between Montaigu and Sauvoire⁷
 By visual means.
 He knew how to put all songs

³ The canon's name is Paganus according to the *Otia*, where the converted cleric is unnamed.

⁴ Idumæa is Edom, southern Judæa and the northern part of Arabia Petræa. Cf. vs. 1600, where Idumæa is the region of Mecca.

⁵ Muhammad's father was 'Abdallâh. 'Abd Manâf was Muhammad's uncle, known as Abû Tâlib. Neither is mentioned in the *Otia*. The poet's error probably derives from a mistake in one of the later manuscripts of Peter of Toledo's Latin translation of the *Apology of al-Kindî*: the two thirteenth or fourteenth-century manuscripts edited by Muñoz Sendino identify 'Abdamenef' as Muhammad's father, *pater* (p. 400), rather than his paternal uncle, *patruus*, as written in the earliest, best manuscript. However, these two later manuscripts state elsewhere that Muhammad's father was 'Abdalla' (p. 382).

⁶ Âminah was Muhammad's mother.

⁷ Sites of religious houses in the area of Laon. In the preface to his Latin translation of the Koran (early thirteenth century), Mark of Toledo writes of Muhammad's skill in letters and mathematics—"Marc de Tolède, traducteur d'Ibn Tûmart (continuación)," p. 261.

To music without dissonance.	48
And by virtue of astronomy,	
He knew if a certain man would have a short life	
Or would live long,	
Which year would be fruitful in grain,	52
Or if it was going to be extremely cold.	
He was exceptionally learned in grammar.	
Through arithmetic he could find	
How many cut stones there are	56
In a tower or a wall	
Or some other precise reckoning.	
He knew indeed that no man	
Could ever confute him	60
By means of rhetoric and dialectic,	
Not even someone wholly in the right.	
Even though he was so knowledgeable,	
He and his lineage were nevertheless servile:	64
Indeed, he was personally the bondman ⁸	
Of a baron whom he served	
Who possessed a great abundance	
Of woods, meadows, and rivers,	68
Orchards, mills, ovens,	
Castles, towns, and villages	
Along with knights, castellans,	
Townsmen, and peasants.	72
And although he had a store	
Of wines, oats, wheat,	
And gold and silver coins,	
He often used to send his agents	76
To faraway places with merchandise,	

⁸ Although poor as a youth, Muhammad was from a very prominent family in Mecca which belonged to the same tribe as his first wife Khadijah. Christian writers usually interpreted the fact that he was in another's service to mean that he was a slave born of slaves. An exception is Mark of Toledo's reference (based upon the *Genealogia Machumeth* in the Toledan Collection) to Muhammad's royal lineage—see his preface to the translation of the Koran, p. 261. Lepage, *Roman*, p. 214, n. 65, interprets *sers de son chief* at vs. 65 as 'vassal.'

According to the custom and manner
 That prevailed in the country then.
 But he accomplished more thanks to Muhammad 80
 Than through any other man's advice.
 He charged him
 With governing his household.
 In his hall he had great authority: 84
 When he was present in the house,
 He was responsible for everything.
 Rather than sleeping, he preferred to stay up at night
 And work hard 88
 For his lord and lady's profit.
 They would never find another
 To attend to their affairs
 As loyally or wisely. 92
 At that time in the region
 There was a man leading a saintly life
 Who dwelt in a hermitage
 On a savage mountain 96
 Where he prayed to Our Lord
 For all the people every day.
 He did not omit himself from his prayers,
 Since whoever forgets himself prays badly, 100
 And he is not of good faith
 Who prays for himself alone.
 The prayer of a righteous man is worth much,
 For Our Lord holds it very dear. 104
 This man lived above reproach.
 He drank little of good, settled wine,⁹
 But, instead, unboiled water.
 On account of God he led such a harsh life, 108
 For he would think himself wholly blameworthy
 Were he to let his body rest much.
 He permitted no evil to grow within him,

⁹ "Good wine over its lees" in the original—that is, the sediment in the cask has not been disturbed.

Rather he scourged himself in his cell 112
 Where he dwelt all alone.
 He was neighbor to bears and wolves.
 He slept little, and he wore a hair shirt.
 He ate no meat; 116
 He was all skin and bones
 Because of his abstinence, and he was quite hirsute.
 He prayed to God in this state of penitence;
 His entire hope was in God. 120
 He nourished his soul with divine words
 And his flesh, with herbs or roots.
 And when his fare was somewhat more substantial,
 Then he ate beechnuts or acorns. 124
 And through the Holy Spirit
 He often learned of future things.
 The people of the region went to him
 To ask for and seek advice. 128
 As a wise man, he instructed them all
 According to their cases and ages.
 And after he had advised them,
 Each returned home most happy. 132
 Once Muhammad went to the saintly man
 In order to learn the principles
 For living righteously;
 And so he prayed devoutly. 136
 As soon as the holy man saw him,
 He perceived immediately
 That he had the devil in his body.
 Therefore he crossed himself 140
 And said: "Get far away from me,
 For I have nothing to do with you,
 Since you love neither God nor his servants—
 On the contrary, you are the slave of vile devils!" 144
 Muhammad was quite stunned,
 Just as if he were drunk.
 He was unaware that such was his nature.
 Therefore he begged the holy man 148

To tell him, if he pleased,
 Why he had spoken ill of him.
 "Muhammad," said the saintly hermit,
 "You belong to the devil body and soul, 152
 And so you are his property.
 Because of your grievous oppression,
 Jesus' religion will be subverted
 And the wicked rule instituted. 156
 Disobedient and full of madness,
 You will strike down holy matrimony
 That the Son of God in paradise
 Formerly made for man and woman. 160
 You will damnify virginity.
 Through your wickedness, the chaste man
 Will become an adulterer,¹⁰ and because of you
 People will become deluded and faithless. 164
 Circumcision of thought
 Will fall out of custom through your doing,
 And that of the flesh,
 Which the accursed race is to practice, will return. 168
 Because of you people will abandon baptism
 And holy unction with chrism.
 You will counterfeit a worthless religion
 From which many a soul will suffer." 172
 Muhammad strongly affirms
 That he would rather endure torture
 Or be put to death
 Than undo God's law. 176
 The holy man knows well that he is lying,
 So he rebukes him harshly
 And orders him to go his way,
 For his presence disturbs him. 180
 Muhammad leaves the hermit.
 He cannot take his mind

¹⁰ Vss. 162-32, *Li chastes, par t'iniquité, / Sera avoutres*, render *Otia*, vs. 60, *Judicioque tuo castus adulter erit*, "And by your decision, the adulterer will be chaste."

Off the words that the recluse spoke.
 He has already begun his madness, 184
 And he trusts more in the very holy man
 Than he does in himself.
 Several times his face goes pale, then livid,
 And he does not know what he is doing. 188
 He is no longer in control of himself:
 The devil has conquered him,
 And he does with him what he wants.
 He aids him for his own ends. 192
 He helps him in every action
 According to his will, since God allows it;
 He aids him just as he wishes.
 The pensive Muhammad returns 196
 To his lord, as is his custom,
 And he serves him as usual.
 He summons the domain's servants,
 Each of whom hastens, runs to him 200
 To ask his will.
 He says to them: "Load
 The pack animals with plenty of scarlet cloth
 And fine golden and plated jewelry 204
 And many-striped fabrics,
 Vair, miniver, and silk cloaks."
 And he himself takes money
 For expenses during the voyage. 208
 They pack many different things.
 They set out to do business in Persia;
 From there they go to the Indians
 And, then, the Ethiopians. 212
 They sell their wares
 And take new goods, which they pack in turn.
 Never before did Muhammad realize
 His wishes so fully, 216
 For he carries back to his lord
 A good three times more than what he took from him.
 God's judgment is so profound

That no one could plumb its depths. 220
 And who could fathom it?
 He chastens lovingly in this life
 Those whom He holds dear.
 After waiting a long time, 224
 He knows well how to punish the wicked man
 And make him topple down low from the heights.
 I wish to tell you about a knight
 And a squire who were out riding 228
 And a very worthy woodcutter
 Gone in search of a load
 Of logs in the forest. The squire
 Was carrying a purse of coins 232
 That his master had entrusted to him,
 But he lost it through his fault,
 And the woodcutter found it.
 On his knees, the righteous man 236
 Blessed God for this.
 Soon afterwards
 The two men took note
 Of their loss; they were most upset. 240
 They rode back
 Through the forest at a walk;
 They found nothing, they were chagrined.
 Enraged the master 244
 Cut off the squire's foot.
 A wise hermit, saintly
 And knowledgeable in all respects, arrived there.
 His house was nearby. 248
 The holy man addressed the squire:
 "Who did this to you?" He answered:
 "Sire, a knight did it to me."
 "Why? Had you wronged him?" 252
 "I was carrying a purse of coins,
 And it slipped away from me in mid-journey.
 He thought I had hidden it,
 And that is why he cut off my foot. 256

I confess to you
 That I did not commit such a misdeed.
 I believe that someone
 Passing through the forest after me found it. 260
 The knight was never wronged by me in this."
 In his mind
 The hermit was confused by the occurrence
 Which seemed to him mysterious. 264
 Inwardly he prayed God
 To illuminate him in the matter
 So that he not enter into the wrong path
 Or error which would lead him astray. 268
 God sent him an angel
 Who recounted the truth to him.
 The angel descended from heaven.
 The place shone all around. 272
 The hermit, who was praying
 In a corner inside his dwelling,
 Fully recognized the angel,
 Who recounted to him the marvel 276
 Regarding the judgment that God ordained:
 "Formerly the knight wrongfully
 Deprived the woodcutter of his property.
 The squire who was ill-treated 280
 Had kicked his mother,
 And now he has been rightly paid back for it.
 He wrongfully kicked his mother.
 It is most just if so he makes amends for it." 284
 Thus the Heavenly King passes judgment.
 In this life the friends of Jesus Christ
 Endure much suffering,
 Just as Scripture affirms, 288
 On account of some sin that they committed
 Or for their love of God,
 So that they may be absolved in the afterlife.
 But the wicked man makes quite merry, 292
 And God often grants him many a benefit

Because of some good deed that he does—
 Even though it may be a small deed,
 He nonetheless rewards him for it here— 296
 Or because He wants him to be more grieved
 After falling low from the heights.
 So it was with Saint Peter of Rome,
 And the perfidious man Nero, 300
 And Saint Job, and Muhammad,
 And the rich man who gobbled up
 So much peacock and good fish,
 So many pieces of venison, 304
 And drank good wine with great pleasure,
 Who had a very soft bed
 And wore noble purple.
 As the Gospel tells us,¹¹ 308
 He did not want to do the leper a good deed.
 Dogs licked his sores;
 They were kinder to him than the rich man
 Who did not have the meager leavings of crumbs 312
 That he no longer wanted to eat
 Given to wretched leper,
 Who was dying of hunger.
 But when death snatched the rich man with its hook, 316
 Soon he was in everlasting torment.
 Henceforth he who used to be leprous
 Has what he deserves;
 The well-fed man is in hell. 320
 The one is cured of his illness;
 The other, who thought only of himself in this life,
 Is greatly afflicted:
 From now on he has such intense thirst 324
 That were he to drink the entire sea,
 Even if it were not at all bitter,
 His thirst would not be quenched by it.

¹¹ Luke 16.19-31. The romance poet expands upon the *Otia*'s four-verse summary of this parable.

He has worse suffering than from lampas. ¹²	328
In this life the saints, Who were tortured in the past, Endured suffering and many torments for God; Thus they won paradise.	332
The cruel, perfidious Jews Even nailed Our Lord God To the cross, And most wrongfully	336
The people to whom He had been promised And sent by God the Father put Him to death. On the third day He rose from the dead. Before His apostles' eyes He ascended,	340
Just as He had foretold, Into paradise, from where He has since Drawn up many of His friends And placed them in glory with Himself	344
And so will do ever after. Therefore you should be unfalteringly Firm and accept poverty, As well as the wicked man's prosperity,	348
In accordance with the exemplum that I related to you About the leper and the destitute rich man. I set Muhammad aside And interlaced an exemplum	352
Very fitting to my subject matter. We shall return to Muhammad where we left off. After a short time his master Died, and they honored	356
His mortal remains as was due. The lady ¹³ was left very troubled: She had neither lord nor child. Muhammad served her as before	360

¹² An equine disease of which constant thirst is a symptom.

¹³ Khadijah, who will become Muhammad's first wife. In Muslim sources she proposes marriage to Muhammad after his return from a business mission on which she sent him—cf. vss. 199-218.

And saw to all her affairs,
 Just as he had usually done for his lord.
 Through his intelligence and know-how,
 He increased her wealth 364
 Much more than he was wont to do.
 As soon as the year had passed,¹⁴
 The lady thought about marrying
 A young knight, but she did not wish at all 368
 To conceal this from Muhammad;
 On the contrary, she conferred with him about it.
 She bared her whole heart to him
 Because she considered him wise. 372
 She said: "I am bothered:
 I am still a young woman,
 And woman is hardly a strong creature.
 I have chambermaids and servants 376
 Who do my bidding well,
 And I have a good many holdings, too—
 Towns, cities, castles, and villages.
 I have many barons and castellans. 380
 But I have been left without a husband,
 Which troubles me much.
 For some time now I have been without father
 Or mother. Consequently, I do not know 384
 How I can manage all this.
 I want to guide myself by your counsel:
 Give me good and sincere advice
 Befitting my person. 388
 Find for me a man whose great prowess
 Is worthy of a knight so that absolutely no one may say:
 'This lady has sunk so low!'
 Since I trust in you, 392
 I have told this to you alone."
 Muhammad answers: "In good faith
 I shall work at it both night and day;

¹⁴ The period of mourning. Cf. vss. 624-25.

Perhaps I shall find	396
Something well suited to your need.	
I shall strive faithfully to do it,	
But it will be difficult for you—	
Unless the True God wishes to operate therein	400
Or He Himself does it—	
To find such a wise and perfect man.”	
After leaving his mistress,	
Muhammad ponders if by some device	404
He might have her as his wife.	
Before a week passes,	
Muhammad returns to his lady.	
He acts as if he has given the matter careful thought,	408
He argues shrewdly on his own behalf,	
And humbly he casts his eyes low.	
He pretends to be sincere—	
You would think that he is a saint!	412
He speaks with great skill,	
For he wants to deceive his lady;	
He puts together such a subtle argument	
That he appears to be a master of rhetoric.	416
He says: “If you take a husband of high rank	
Who is young,	
Handsome, and knightly,	
Perhaps he will be of an amorous bent:	420
He will love a woman other than you	
And will not care about you—	
On the contrary, you will be held in contempt,	
And if you mention it, you will be beaten.	424
Thus he will be arrogant and cruel to you,	
And he will squander all your wealth, too,	
Through his pride and wantonness.	
If one does not take care to retain	428
What was acquired over a long time,	
It seems to me that soon it is gone.	
Therefore I advise you in good faith	
Never to marry	432

A young man who is prideful
 And insolent because of his noble parentage."
 "Muhammad, I quite believe that you already have in mind
 Some old man who is very sensible. 436
 Do tell me your thought.
 He will make a good husband for me:
 Wisely he will govern
 Me, my possessions, and my people. 440
 Thus I shall have little to worry about.
 I shall marry the old man."
 "But a marriage
 Between an old man and young woman is not good. 444
 An old man is irritable and soon goes sour,
 As you well know.
 His eyes keep excreting matter,
 And he is ever getting smaller. 448
 He is weak, he has a cough,
 And his whole body shakes.
 In him there is neither joy nor amorous pleasure.
 He often suffers from catarrh 452
 And chills in the belly,
 In time his hair turns completely white,
 He can hardly hear at all,
 And gout often gets a hold on him, too. 456
 He is constantly very quarrelsome;
 Every day he is more and more besotted;
 His face is wrinkled.¹⁵
 But a young woman has a joyful heart, 460
 And she loves feasts and pleasures,
 And, also, her skin has a lily hue
 Mixed with a rosy color,
 Quite the opposite of that other condition 464
 Which I recounted regarding the old man,
 Unless she is afflicted with a scar

¹⁵ The contrasting of a youth and an old man as lovers in vss. 417-59 is a common literary topic. Compare the unflattering portrait of the old man in Juvenal's *Satires* 10.188-239.

Or some malady.
 She hates her life with the old man. 468
 And since they are so unfavorable,
 I consent to neither the young nor the old man,
 If you wish to follow my counsel
 And trust in my opinion." 472
 "I am foolish to lecture you so:
 Do I seek to instruct Solomon?"
 "My lady, you know much better than I.
 But in any event, you have seen 476
 That it frequently happens to many a man
 That he is more successful in another's affairs
 And often watches over another's possessions
 Better than he does his own. 480
 I can show you examples of this.
 You can prove it well through my case:
 I have always set my interests aside
 To acquire profit for you. 484
 And while your husband was alive,
 From among all your servants
 He singled me out as the most productive,
 And all were well aware of it. 488
 I have behaved wisely and loyally towards you,
 Who ought indeed to trust my advice:
 Know without a doubt that what I am saying,
 I say for your benefit." 492
 The lady answers Muhammad:
 "Well then, explain what you wish
 In keeping with reason, and I shall do it.
 I shall gladly trust your counsel." 496
 Muhammad, rather more assured
 Than usual and without fear,
 Starts to speak his mind:
 "My lady," he says, "I know all 500
 About the business of your domain and your people.
 You have no town or holding
 Or any source of income or possession

With which I have not been familiar since my youth. 504
 You would not find another who knows so much about this
 Nor who holds your profit so dear.
 And were I not in servitude,
 You could not be better off 508
 Given in marriage or wed
 To a man of high birth than to me.”
 The lady, quite composed,
 Betrays on her face no sign of anger 512
 Because of his speech which is hard to take;
 Rather, she replies to him in this manner,
 Courteously, without reproaching him:
 “I neither blame nor approve of your advice 516
 Completely, for you spoke
 To me truthfully about the nobility
 Of the prideful young man.
 Soon he would seek and love another 520
 And abandon his wedded wife.
 Neither do I value the union
 Of an old man and a young wife,
 Nor does it seem at all good to me. 524
 You explained to me well the reasons.
 Hence he would never be a husband
 To whom I could accommodate myself.
 Nor am I able to agree 528
 That you and I could join
 In matrimony, it seems to me,
 For people would slander me
 Were I to marry you. 532
 What good argument could I find for it?
 I would much rather be dead
 Than for people to malign me
 Or for some wicked man to say about it 536
 That you slept with me
 Or touched me
 Lecherously or sinfully
 In order to do something evil. 540

Then they would not be able to hold themselves back
 From saying in derision:
 'Our lady must lie underneath,
 She who used to be on top!' 544
 I do not want to abase myself to such a degree.
 Under me I have many knights
 And people who should hold me in high regard.
 They would not judge me worthy to be served 548
 If I took you as my lord.
 Therefore I would lose my honor.
 They would not do your bidding,
 Rather they would hold us in contempt. 552
 Thus I would suffer great loss because of you,
 And I would fall in people's esteem."
 Muhammad listens calmly
 To what his lady tells him. 556
 He is silent, and he looks down;
 He holds back a little before speaking.
 He raises his eyes, then he addresses
 His lady, who is no fool, 560
 And says to her: "You ought indeed to believe me
 If I speak to you truthfully.
 Should you wish to enfranchise me,
 You need fear nothing: 564
 You have no vassal nor servant
 Nor any knight so powerful
 Who will not submit through fear
 Or force or great love. 568
 Then you will find here no lord so mighty,
 Nor one so lowly, who would dare speak ill of it.
 They will speak only well of you then.
 Your goods and honors will increase, 572
 For I shall know how to achieve that.
 I shall even have foreign knights
 Become your vassals.
 If I lie, have me put to death 576
 In torment and great suffering."

When the lady hears him say this,
 She replies that she will readily do
 What her people advise her 580
 And that she wants to act properly through counsel—
 I am hardly astonished by that.

Muhammad leaves the room.
 As soon as he has the opportunity, 584
 He speaks to each of the high barons
 Whose aid he requests,
 For he has very great need of it.
 To one he promises many good war horses, 588
 To another, steel armor
 And whatever this world values.
 He accomplishes so much through his promises
 That he wins everyone over to aiding him. 592
 He assembles them
 In a place where he leads them.
 After all have vowed
 To help him loyally, 596
 He reveals his thoughts fully to them
 And entreats that each work
 And endeavor for him to be enfranchised
 By his lady and wedded to her 600
 And that out of love, they willingly pledge
 Reverence and loyalty to him
 Just as each did
 To their lord while he lived. 604

The root of all sins is
 Greed, which badly
 Taints the barons
 Who want to have Muhammad, 608
 A former bondman, take their lady
 As his wife so that they can gain his great gifts.
 Those who earlier were his superiors
 Submit to him for the sake of gifts. 612

Together they go to their mistress.
 They wish to advise and tell her

What they heard from Muhammad:
 "Lady," they say, "if our lord, 616
 Who was so wise and powerful,
 Were not dead, as God willed,
 You would be hard put to find anyone
 So bold as to cause you trouble. 620
 All alone he would indeed know how to protect you,
 Nor would you need be concerned about it.
 But since he is deceased
 And you have waited a sufficient time 624
 And are still without an heir,
 You need to take another husband.
 Alone you would not be able to manage your domain
 Or endure the effort. 628
 But it seems clear that you were chaste
 As long as you had your husband.
 You are still esteemed for it.
 Therefore your followers have met 632
 So that, should such yet be your intention,¹⁶
 You will abandon that resolve on our recommendation:
 Do not hold to it any longer.
 We ask you to take a lord. 636
 If you leave your land without an heir,
 After your death it will be beset
 By deadly war.
 Each will want his part of it, 640
 Or the most powerful one
 Will want it all.
 He will have slain by the sword
 Any who oppose him, 644
 Or we shall be imprisoned
 And all be put to death
 If we go against him
 And do not become his thralls. 648
 If you do not wish

¹⁶ That is, to continue without a husband.

To assent to our counsel, you will make us
Suffer such harm as we have indicated.

Please do not refuse us: 652

It is proper for you to have a husband
And us, by necessity, a lord."

The lady, who is pleased by the speech,
Answers them by saying: 656

"If formerly I had the intention
Of not marrying,
Indeed I would have soon abandoned it
Both because of reason and duty, 660

But I do not wish to hold to any plan
That does not come from your counsel.
Therefore, then, find me someone
Who will be suitable and good 664

For me and beneficial for you.
If, however, he were less fitting
For me than he ought to be
Or were less noble, 668
Still I would not scorn your advice;
I would follow it without opposition."

As soon as they hear her response,
Straightway the followers 672
Entreat her to promise them
To do all that they wish
Without a long delay.

The lady grants this and listens 676
To a knight, an old man of noble birth,
Wise and well-read,

Who begins to recount and tell
How Our Lord God 680
Drowned everyone

When He sent the great deluge
Because of the criminal sin
With which all were sullied 684

Then, excepting eight souls alone—
Noah and his sons and their wives:

"One reads in a holy book
 That Noah, under the influence of wine 688
 Which he had drunk, fell asleep naked.
 One of his sons,¹⁷ acting impiously and vilely,
 Laughed when he saw his father thus
 And pointed him out to his brother Shem 692
 And Japheth, who, ashamed that someone might see him,
 Covered him.
 As soon as Noah learned this,
 He felt such shame and vexation because of it 696
 That he cursed him and had him
 Enslaved for life.
 In the beginning all were
 Equally free and noble, 700
 But because Adam sinned,
 He stained us all with sin:
 Therefore a child born now
 Would be tormented in hell because of it 704
 Were it not nullified through baptism
 And grace before his death.
 Owing to a single bite Adam
 So badly sullied and mortified us 708
 That we cannot eschew sin
 And we all must die.
 Adam could have prevented it
 If he and his wife, too, 712
 Had obeyed God's commandment,
 And every man alike
 Would be noble in both body and soul.
 I have told you this, my lady, 716
 Since perhaps you did not know it,
 For I saw it in the Scriptures.
 Do not put your trust in mutable things.
 If I have made clear the meaning of this, 720
 Thus servitude came into being.

¹⁷ Ham or Cham, father of Canaan—Genesis 9.20-27.

He who goes about cleansing himself of sin
 Gains very great freedom;
 When he submits to serving God, 724
 He becomes His son, and He, his Father;
 Thus he is king of kings and emperor.
 Then no one can say that he is a slave.
 As proof of this I cite Our Lord 728
 And Saint John the Evangelist
 Regarding the term 'servant of God.'
 Certainly one should believe this evidence—
 Its word is always true. 732
 Therefore a faithful and resolute man
 Ought to be free and noble,
 Live without any taint of vice,
 And take great care not to sin. 736
 My lady, you have plenty of servants,
 But in one there is much greater goodness
 Than in all the others.
 In case of need, he would be valiant and brave, 740
 Very vigorous and stalwart,
 And his person is comely, too,
 Well-formed, with straight limbs.
 If his lineage were not servile, 744
 He would be worthy of kingship,
 For he is wise and gifted."
 The lady, who acts as if she has no idea
 That he is talking about Muhammad, 748
 Answers him while dissembling:
 "I do not know whom you are commending to me.
 Show him to me. If he is as you say,
 He will be enfranchised on your recommendation." 752
 They lead in Muhammad at once.
 Quickly he is enfranchised,
 And they undertake the marriage negotiations.
 They carry out the task 756
 So that one and all give their approval:
 Muhammad weds his lady.

The barons show great joy.
 They have silk cloaks and robes made; 760
 They have hung on high tapestries
 Embroidered with sacred stories
 From the Old Testament
 And dyed in diverse fine colors. 764
 Many high princes go there;
 No unimportant man remains.
 There are numerous beautiful and graceful ladies
 And many noble maids 768
 And several burghers and squires
 Who bear a good many goblets of pure gold
 With various precious stones.
 Minstrels take there 772
 Many delightful vielles,¹⁸
 Mandores,¹⁹ and drums.
 Harps, kits,²⁰ hurdy-gurdies,²¹
 And gay songs resound. 776
 What might I relate about the meal?
 There are numerous partridges and pheasants,
 Many swans and peacocks,
 Much heron and good fish. 780
 The guests drink spiced and honeyed wines
 And Tiber and Ferré²² vintages.

¹⁸ See the description of various sorts of vielles, fiddles played with a bow, in Théodore Gérold, *La musique au Moyen Âge*, CFMA, 73 (1932; reprint ed., Paris: Honoré Champion, 1983), pp. 381-84.

¹⁹ *Baudoire*, a small four or five-stringed lute—see the description, under the heading *mandoire*, by Albert Henry, ed., *Les œuvres d'Adenet Le Roi, tome V, "Cleomadés," volume II*, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Travaux de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 46 (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1971), pp. 713-14.

²⁰ *Gigues*, a smaller version of the vielle. See Gérold, *La musique*, p. 385, and Henry, p. 711.

²¹ *Cyfonies*. A *chifonie* (or *symphonia*) is a stringed instrument resembling a vielle in form; played without a bow, it has incorporated in it a resined wheel turned by a crank, and it is capable of producing several sounds simultaneously—Gérold, *La musique*, pp. 389-92.

²² Ferré is an unidentified locality. Ziolecki suggests Ferrato and cites examples of Old French *ferre* or *ferret* as a kind of wine, p. 69, n. 4. The wines in vs. 781 are *piument* and *claré*.

No one could recount this
 Without missing something. 784
 Very great merrymaking takes place there,
 But soon it changes into distress:
 Very often one sees it happen
 That great joy turns into grief. 788
 Muhammad has a falling fit
 Before the gathering.
 He tosses about in a most horrible manner:
 His eyes roll in his head, 792
 He foams at the mouth.
 The lady thinks him dead;
 She and her household weep most bitterly.
 She flees to her chamber, 796
 She locks the door,
 She has no desire for consolation.
 She had great confidence in Muhammad,
 But now she has lost hope. 800
 She rends her crimson tunic,
 Snatches and pulls and plucks out her hair,
 Tears her face with her nails;
 She lies in a faint for a long spell. 804
 Muhammad regains consciousness;
 He addresses the barons courteously:
 "You have become very sad
 Because of what happened to me. 808
 I am well aware that you are much grieved by it.
 Do you know where my lady went?"
 They reply: "She went
 Into her chambers quite upset." 812
 He sends there a messenger,
 Who finds the door bolted.
 He does not take the lady back with him.
 Muhammad goes there himself. 816
 He says: "My lady, come to me,

And do not carry on so sorrowfully."
 She remains silent. He strikes the door:
 "Lady," he says, "are you quite deaf?" 820
 He pounds so much that she opens the door
 In order to quiet him. He pleads with her a great deal,
 But he cannot rally her enough
 To make her willing to take heart. 824
 Muhammad cajoles her sweetly.
 The lady reproaches him,
 She faults his servitude,
 And he praises her noble lineage. 828
 He puts up with what she wants to say,
 Even though he is incensed by it,
 So as the sooner to quiet her
 Or incline her more to his love. 832
 He says: "Neither weeping nor wailing is of any avail.
 What is done is done."
 The lady becomes a bit calmer
 And leaves off reproaching Muhammad. 836
 When he sees her pacified,
 He says: "Wise and esteemed lady,
 If you want to hear out your servant,
 I shall tell you something 840
 About which you ought to rejoice,
 And every word of it will be true."
 She answers him:
 "Well then, say what you will 844
 Without deceiving me with your words
 As you always did before!"
 Muhammad replies: "If you hear
 Me lie, I willingly consent 848
 To your having my tongue torn out."
 The lady promises him to do just that.
 Muhammad says to her straightway:
 "Just a while ago you indeed believed 852
 That I was very ill,
 On account of which you were quite dismayed.

When I stretched out on the ground,
 The angel descended upon me. 856
 Human nature is very weak:
 I could not endure such a lofty being
 Without falling to the ground—
 Not because I felt ill, 860
 Even though I frothed so
 And thrashed about wretchedly.
 Now hear what God announced to me
 And commanded through His angel: 864
 Just as Gabriel announced
 To the chaste Virgin the future event
 Of Jesus' coming,
 So he reveals to me the things 868
 That will occur through Himself,
 Through His sweet and most holy compassion.
 He sent into the place of torment those first men
 For having transgressed the law 872
 That was ordained according to nature.
 But Moses received in written form
 The law of Our Lord;
 He went to show and declare it to the people, 876
 For Our Lord delivered it to him.
 The people willingly promised
 To abide by God's commandments,
 But soon they left the straight and narrow. 880
 For these reasons all the dead
 Then had the abode that they deserved.
 But God does not wish in the least for our perdition,
 Nor does Our Lady Saint Mary 884
 Who nourished and suckled Him,
 Who raised Him and put Him to sleep in the cradle.
 He Whom the angels honor so highly
 Lay wrapped in swaddling clothes, 888
 Given up to great poverty,
 In the manger amongst animals.
 He Who possessed all riches

Became poor for the sake of mankind.	892
He is the source of everything that man has, With the sole exception of sin.	
He ordered His friends to pursue virtue And flee sin.	896
He despises all who are proud, And, so, He loves the humble Who appeal to Him sincerely.	
He prized virginity more Than marriage; nonetheless, He never made it a commandment As he did with marriage	900
In order to increase the human lineage, With a sole man and only one woman united In good, mutual loyalty.	904
Therefore, those who come together otherwise Separate themselves from Our Lord.	908
He said: 'Let each do unto others What he wishes others to do unto him.'	
He did away with circumcision. Through clear explanation	912
He revealed to us the meaning of many allegories That formerly were obscure. Thus the old law	
Was perfected through the new one. When Our Lord God	916
Taught such things to the Jews And perverse Pharisees, They flung at Him with animosity	920
Many puzzling words in order to trap Him, But they were never able to catch Him In saying anything foolish.	
For this reason, by way of deceit they often bore False witness against Him, But never did the beastly race Gain anything from the deceit	924
That it voiced against Him everywhere	928

Until He allowed it
 And suffered for us on the cross,
 Where He endured much hardship.
 He removed from the darkness of hell 932
 His friends of whom He had been deprived.
 On the third day He rose from the dead.
 Afterwards He went to His disciples,
 But it so happened then 936
 That Saint Thomas was absent.
 When his companions saw him,
 As soon as possible they told him:
 'We saw Jesus Christ.' 940
 He said that he would never believe it
 Until he saw Him.
 Consequently Jesus went back to him later
 And drew him near 944
 And said: 'Now place your finger here:
 One should indeed believe what he sees.'
 Saint Thomas set about speaking:
 'You are my God and my Lord.' 948
 Jesus said: 'You believed in Me,
 Thomas, because you saw Me,
 And those will be blessed
 Who believe in Me because of true faith.' 952
 He ate with His disciples
 So that the people would then believe
 Him to be God in human flesh.
 He ordered His apostles 956
 To spread the Christian religion
 Throughout the world and win over souls.
 Afterwards He went up into heaven,
 Whence the Holy Spirit came down. 960
 When It descended upon the apostles
 In the form of fire, straightway everyone comprehended
 Both their thought and speech,
 So wisely instructed were they. 964
 They strove greatly to evangelize,

They spread out through all countries,
 They caused many peoples to become Christians.²³
 They were not fearful; 968
 Rather, they wished very much
 To suffer death or martyrdom
 In order to win Our Lord's love.
 And those of the highest rank 972
 Humbled themselves more than the others,
 And he who was accustomed to the easy life
 Desired to be uncomfortable for God:
 Instead of purple and scarlet, 976
 He wore sack and matted cloth.
 They were not wicked:
 In the beginning, they were saintly
 And stood in awe of the faith. 980
 But now it is otherwise.
 Sin has established its authority:
 One relative harms another,
 Brother injures brother, 984
 A son desires his father's
 Or mother's death in order to have
 His inheritance and possessions.
 Hardly anyone is free of envy, 988
 Pride, and treachery.
 People would rather suffer hunger
 Than eat any but the finest morsel.
 God's commandments are held in contempt. 992
 What more might I tell you?
 Everyone is tainted
 With evil and vile sins,
 And Jesus Christ will not die again 996
 To redeem the good and the wicked;
 Yet He does not wish for all of us
 Who cannot obey His law to perish.

²³ Three verses rhyme at 965-67—likewise, at 1376-78, 1725-27, and 1782-84. These anomalies may result from the omission of a verse. Five verses rhyme at 1857-61.

He will lighten such a heavy burden for us: 1000
 He will do away with baptism entirely;
 One man will have ten wives,²⁴
 Nor will he be doing wrong at all in this:
 Our Lord announced and commanded it 1004
 To me through Gabriel.
 He will see to other matters
 At the proper time and place.
 Thus it happens to me each time 1008
 Gabriel descends upon me
 That I thrash about in such a manner,
 But I suffer no pain,
 And as soon as he goes back to heaven, 1012
 I return wholly to myself,
 And I rejoice much in my heart
 When I know the heavenly secrets.
 To you alone have I revealed this, 1016
 So you ought to be most happy about it.”
 After Muhammad recounted to his wife
 Such a marvel,
 Well does he think to have fooled her, 1020
 But she spits out at him most injurious words
 And tells him: “I have heard you out,
 Traitor full of venom and filth.
 I believed that you would tell me the truth 1024
 And not a single word of it would be a lie,
 For you swore to it.
 Yet you have told me such a great falsehood
 And have lied contrary to your promise 1028
 So that I can barely restrain myself
 From having you lose your lying tongue
 The moment you deceived me—as is right,
 For you agreed to it on your oath— 1032

²⁴ Islamic law permits a man to have four wives, but Peter the Venerable claims in his *Summa totius hæresis Saracenorum* that Muhammad allowed eighteen wives and more, and the *Apology of al-Kindî* names seventeen of the Prophet's wives. The *Otia* and the romance do not mention concubines.

Or from having you thrown down a well."

Muhammad replies to his wife, Since he sees that she is distressed: "You know well the holy hermit Who is a man of high merit: Let him give you good assurance about it, For I take him as my witness in this. Thereupon you should be satisfied. He knows those things which will come to pass— You can rest well assured about that. Not through intimidation or gifts or other means Could anyone make him Lie about this or practice deceit. His heart is loyal and true. If you hear him deny The things that I told you truly, Have me burned, hanged, or drowned."	1036
"I shall go tomorrow," says the lady, "But I swear upon my body and soul That if he says you speak falsely, I will have you hanged or burned!" Muhammad says that he agrees entirely to this, But before midnight he takes to the road. He climbs the high mountain; He goes to the hermit and recounts to him Without misrepresentation the whole matter Regarding both his lady and his shame. He says: "You know very well, However, that three years have passed Since you saw me here previously. As I am well aware, you told me then That because of me the Christian religion would be undone And sacred faith would be destroyed Along with baptism and marriage, Virginity and maidenhood And many other cherished virtues And many a good prophecy.	1040 1044 1048 1052 1056 1060 1064 1068

If God has provided for it,
 Before seeing it I know it will be so.
 Therefore He orders that these things be done 1072
 Through me and that the people see them.
 If thus the religion which was established
 By Jesus Christ is destroyed,
 No soul will ever be absolved 1076
 Of sin, nor will there be any way to keep
 All from going down into hell
 And suffering pain and torment,
 And none, great or humble, 1080
 Young or old, will go to heaven.
 Nevertheless, if you wish to trust me,
 The harm can indeed be less grievous
 And detrimental 1084
 After I make the whole Christian line
 Suffer death cruelly,
 Excepting you, a holy and kind man,
 And every one of your disciples, 1088
 Whom I shall not allow to be harmed in the least.
 Thus through divine influence,
 Great Christian peoples can come into being
 From these small shoots." 1092
 Then the holy man answers him:
 "Swear that you will not tear down
 The temple²⁵ and that you will do no harm
 To me or my friends. 1096
 After you swear and promise this,
 I shall consent to do what you want
 If it does not go against the faith."
 After thinking deeply about it, 1100
 Muhammad replies to the hermit:
 "Many a thing seems contrary to Jesus Christ
 That one might do licitly,

²⁵ The *Otia*, vs. 594, specifies *Solime templum*, the Temple in Jerusalem, from which Muhammad begins his ascent to heaven in *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder*.

Were he to examine it closely: 1104
 A bad thing that wards off something worse is good."
 "That is true," the hermit says to him.
 "Well then, tell me your will,
 Provided that you agree to adhere loyally 1108
 To what you promised me."
 Muhammad swears to him to abide by it.
 He tells him everything that happened to him,
 How he married his lady, 1112
 Kin to noble folk,
 And how all valued him for his wisdom.
 "Just recently I wed her
 And acceded to the high nobility, 1116
 But soon the great joy about which I told you
 Was changed into sorrow,
 For I fell before my lady's feet
 With a sudden illness. 1120
 It truly seemed that my soul
 Was on the point of leaving my body.
 As soon as I recovered from my affliction,
 I told my lady that I had not 1124
 Been ill and that in this way God sends me
 His new revelations from heaven
 Through His archangel Gabriel.
 Thus I thought to fool her. 1128
 Since she was not willing to believe me,
 I told her that you would vouch to it
 And would be my witness.
 Consequently, she will come to you tomorrow 1132
 And will ask you about it.
 This is why I have come to you beforehand.
 See to it that she believes me.
 If you do, know indeed 1136
 That I shall leave you and yours in peace,
 And if you are not willing to do so,
 I shall have you all,
 Disciples as well as master, put to death 1140

So that none of you will ever be able to rise again."

The hermit replies by saying
 That in order to preserve Jesus Christ's religion,
 He grants all to Muhammad, 1144
 Even though it bothers him,
 And will say what he told him.
 Muhammad does not lose his presence of mind,
 Rather, he returns home before daybreak; 1148
 He gets into his bed stealthily.
 As soon as the lady rises,
 She goes to the recluse to learn
 About the matter, but she does not know 1152
 That Muhammad was there earlier.
 After she explained to him
 Her reason for going up the mountain,
 The hermit tells her 1156
 What Muhammad told him.
 According to my source,
 I ought to praise him for this.
 Nevertheless, I truly believe 1160
 That the source lies to me
 About his helping to substantiate
 For the deceitful Muhammad
 The angel's coming to him 1164
 When the vile sickness seized him
 And his establishment of a new religion
 On behalf of God.
 The lady returns home most happy 1168
 To have the companionship,
 Through marriage, of such a man
 Whom God wishes to charge
 With announcing and revealing 1172
 Another religion to his contemporaries.
 Thus the lady believes him.
 Consequently she asks him to forgive her
 For having opposed him 1176
 And his will.

Henceforth she loves him sincerely
 And fears and honors him as her lord.
 She no longer has any desire to harm him 1180
 Or be mistress over him.
 When Muhammad sees
 That he has duped his lady,
 He rejoices much in his heart 1184
 For having gone to so much trouble
 To gain the hermit as his witness.
 He tells her the following:
 "Lady, I do believe now that you know, 1188
 Since you were with the recluse,
 That I lied to you in no respect.
 But I shall ask you to do
 One thing prudently: 1192
 Every time you see
 That I am unable to stand up
 Or endure the heavenly force
 When blessed Gabriel descends upon me, 1196
 Have me covered immediately
 With a precious cloth,
 And, so, pay very careful attention to this
 Until the said angel 1200
 Ascends again into heaven
 So that if someone unaware
 Of God's revelation sees me
 When I have fallen to the ground, 1204
 He may not be greatly upset
 Or frightened."
 His lady says: "I shall carry out
 Your wishes and your orders; 1208
 Most gladly shall I strive to execute them.
 None of my men will ever be so impudent,
 Either in deed or word,
 As to do or say anything 1212
 Whereby you might be offended in the least.
 I guarantee you this.

What I have of yours means more to me than my own.”	
Through his iniquity, Muhammad	1216
Gains for himself much greater authority	
Than he used to have.	
He does not wish to laugh or joke.	
People hardly recognize him anymore—	1220
He seems to have come down from heaven.	
He has a secret, underground cellar built	
Where no one goes but he.	
His lady thinks that he had it made	1224
So that he can	
Pray to God there, without being disturbed	
By people, in order to live more devotedly	
According to divine law.	1228
There he nourishes on bread and wine	
A calf, all spotlessly	
White, and through training	
He rears and teaches it	1232
To kneel without delay	
Before his feet so that it appears	
As if the calf is worshipping him,	
And it does not wish to leave there,	1236
However much discomfort it may suffer,	
Until he makes	
A sign for it to rise.	
After a short time it happens	1240
That all the knights go	
To Muhammad, who convoked them	
To a great feast by public announcement.	
There is a very large assembly	1244
Of the country’s knights	
And ladies and maidens,	
Squires and damsels.	
The barons, knights, and castellans	1248
Are grouped by themselves, ²⁶ and the peasants	

²⁶ In *Baron, chevalier, chastelain / Furent paraus*, vss. 1248-49, Lepage

Have their place on the other side.
 The ladies are gathered by themselves
 According to the custom of the land. 1252
 Woman has a most frivolous spirit:
 Right away she says a flighty word,
 Be it foolish or wise, as soon as it enters her head.
 Each lady praises her own spouse 1256
 In the presence of Muhammad's wife.
 Consequently, she begins to praise hers:
 "You relate great good about your lords,"
 She declares, "but in mine there is even greater. 1260
 The grace of God has rained down
 And imbued the heart
 Of Muhammad, my lord and husband.
 Through His angel, God reveals to him 1264
 That He wishes to establish a new religion.
 I hardly dare tell it to you,
 But if it were kept secret,
 I would relate to you such a wonder 1268
 As has never been heard before."
 All grant her this in good faith
 And beg her to tell them.
 Now she recounts to them everything 1272
 That Muhammad told her.
 Each marvels
 At the news she hears.
 They say: "You are indeed fortunate 1276
 To be married to him."
 For four days everyone
 Celebrates greatly and makes merry there.
 Afterwards, the people leave the court 1280
 And go their separate ways.
 In their homes they do not keep silent
 About what they saw outside.

interprets *paraus* as "placé[s] selon l'ordre de préséance," p. 238—likewise *pareles*, vs. 1251. I have interpreted *paraux* as *par eux* = 'à eux seuls,' and *pareles* as *par eles* = 'à elles seules.' Cf. *aux* = *eux* at vs. 1609.

They say: "This man is wise and good, 1284
 And that other is a valiant knight."
 And while they thus praise one another,
 They do not slight their lord Muhammad.
 He is extolled more for goodness 1288
 Than any other man named there.
 Nonetheless, they have not yet heard
 All that their wives know,
 Who subsequently tell their lords 1292
 What they heard about Muhammad.
 They reveal their lady's secret
 That through the holy angel,
 Muhammad knows things before they happen. 1296
 Every single one of them crosses himself
 And is greatly moved
 When he hears the story.
 The ladies say that he is to produce 1300
 And bring forth a new religion
 On God's order
 At a future time and place:
 "For the code that we follow 1304
 Is too harsh and hard to understand.
 Therefore God wishes to change it for us
 And ordain it through Muhammad."
 All are astonished and say: 1308
 "My God! what do such things signify?"
 They do not believe him so worthy
 As to receive this favor from the Heavenly King;
 Yet they think that they may be mistaken, 1312
 For they see well that he is graced
 By success
 In everything he undertakes.
 And in order to be certain about this, 1316
 They return to his court.
 All the knights together,
 It seems to me, call for Muhammad.
 He comes, he does not tarry. 1320

The knights honor him greatly,
 And he receives them most graciously.
 He is seated
 On a cypress-wood throne 1324
 Where shine many gems
 That are very precious and dear.
 Next to him are the elders,
 Surrounded here and there 1328
 By the young knights.
 He says: "Welcome.
 Unless you tell me, I do not know
 Why you have come back." 1332
 To a man of distinguished family,
 Honored by his lineage,
 Wiser and older than the others,
 They give leave to speak 1336
 And ask him to talk on their behalf.
 Humbly he begins by saying:
 "We come as vassals to you, fair lord,
 Our liege and ruler. 1340
 You love your vassals more loyally
 Than children do their father
 Or the mother does her son.
 Because of your protection, we are safe. 1344
 Know indeed that whenever
 We hear praise spoken of you,
 We are happier than if it were of ourselves.
 But today public report 1348
 Extols you more than any man:
 Since you are so favored by God
 And His celestial archangels
 That the True God wishes to accomplish through you 1352
 The things He has to do—
 A great, heavenly matter—
 You are God in human flesh.
 Therefore people should honor you, 1356
 Build churches for you and worship you,

And pray with a pure mind
 That you may wish to be at peace with the world."²⁷
 Muhammad says: "I did not want 1360
 To boast. For that reason I intended
 To remain silent about this all my life,
 But now I shall under no circumstances do so,
 For I believe it would be a sin 1364
 To conceal God's will and hold my tongue.
 I want to appoint for you a time and place—
 And may it please God to lead us there!—
 Where I can disclose to you 1368
 The will of God and reveal
 How He wishes to lighten the burden
 Of the law. Therefore I want to send
 Letters into many foreign lands 1372
 In order to ask that all people
 Be present then and there
 To hear God's will."
 After being summoned, all arrive, 1376
 Great and lowly, at that time and place.
 Thus Muhammad conducts a meeting:
 All become silent in his presence.
 He is so very eloquent 1380
 That it would be surprising if all the people
 Who hear him and listen did not believe him.
 Since I recounted this to you earlier,
 I need only go over it briefly: 1384
 Let the law of Moses return,
 And everyone be redeemed;
 Let the new law be quashed,
 And the old one, restored, 1388
 Along with circumcision of the flesh;
 And let a man have ten wives,

²⁷ Sigebert of Gembloux reports that Muslims worship Muhammad as a god—*Chronica*, col. 118. Guibert of Nogent, on the other hand, claims rightly that they consider him a just man, not a god—*Gesta Dei per Francos*, col. 693.

And one woman, ten husbands ²⁸	
Without ever being accused	1392
Of sin or deserving blame.	
He promises them that many things	
Will be announced to them later,	
As soon as God orders it.	1396
After he tells them this,	
They ascend a mountain	
At his request.	
Then he says to them that originally	1400
The law was given on a mountain,	
And Moses carried it back	
Inscribed on two stone tablets.	
What he tells them is true.	1404
Thus he deceives them artfully,	
For earlier by way of ruse he made	
On the mountain top a channel	
Of honey and another of milk,	1408
And then he covered them with green turf	
So that no one would ever discover them.	
The very white bull	
Which Muhammad fed on bread	1412
And clear, wholesome wine	
Is concealed nearby.	
Muhammad attached the aforementioned law	
That he had written	1416
To its horns.	
As soon as the assembly draws near,	
Muhammad orders all to be silent.	
On his knees, he kisses the ground;	1420
In a loud voice he begins to preach	
About the law that God wished	
To give them, just as he told them.	
But there are still many of the knights present	1424

²⁸ Islam allows a woman to have only one husband. This misrepresentation originates in the *Otia*.

Who hear him speak
 Yet do not believe all that he tells them.
 Muhammad says to his vassals:
 "Devoutly we ask God, 1428
 If it please Him,
 To give us some sure sign
 Or token in this spot
 Whereby we may look forward 1432
 To the law that He has to hand down."
 Without uttering a word,
 All kneel
 And pray reverently to God about it. 1436
 After they have prayed to God for a long time,
 Muhammad is the first
 To rise; thus he takes some of the wisest men
 With him and leads them 1440
 To where he placed the milk and honey.
 He raises his hands and eyes towards heaven,
 He begins to pray to God straightway:
 "God," says he, "Omnipotent Father 1444
 Who created everything through Your word,
 Beasts, fish, and birds of the air;
 Glorious Father, infallible,
 Who by Your holy decrees 1448
 Created the four elements
 From nothing and all their domains;
 Who sent Your Son into the world,
 Through Whom You redeemed us all 1452
 And gave us the law:
 Whoever keeps it rightly saves his soul.
 But the world is weakened now.
 Much of its goodness has been lost or perverted. 1456
 Let the burden of this be lessened
 By a sign made here,
 One that is not at all usual,
 To which the people may yield 1460
 And whereby they may feel that You are kind

In this religion which is to be instituted."
 When he finishes his prayer,
 Guilefully he goes about here and there 1464
 In one part of the high mountain;
 He discloses the spot where he hid
 The honey and the milk,
 The latter of which he tastes 1468
 Just as if he knew nothing about it
 So that no one will be able to detect
 His ruse. All drink after him
 In order, as it behooves each— 1472
 First the great lords
 And the others next—
 But no one realizes
 That he has been duped. 1476
 They raise their hands and voices;
 Thus they praise Our Lord.
 In his deceitful fashion Muhammad weeps,
 Avows his sins, and gives thanks to God. 1480
 He says: "We ought to love God well
 And invoke as Father
 Him Who governs us with such sweetness
 That He brings us a new religion, 1484
 For the honey signifies
 The law that will be given unto us,
 And the milk here,
 Our Father Who revokes the harsh laws for us." 1488
 After this, he does not fall silent;
 By weeping he moves them all.
 Then he addresses his people:
 "Let us pray now to God Who formerly 1492
 Gave the law to Moses
 On Mount Sinai
 That through His great charity, He be so kind as to send
 And make known to us with certainty 1496
 The law, written with His little finger,
 That He wishes to bestow on us."

And after speaking thus,
 He prays to Our Lord loudly 1500
 And shouts so vigorously
 That the bull now hears him
 And heeds his voice,
 Then it looses itself completely, 1504
 For it was not tied very firmly.
 It goes to Muhammad, kneels
 Before him, and thus worships him.
 Everyone rushes to the spot. 1508
 Between its two horns it bears
 The laws that Muhammad made
 And wrote with his own hand.
 The faithless hypocrite is crafty; 1512
 He pretends to be astonished
 So as to make the marvel seem greater.
 Acting as if he knows nothing about this
 Or has never seen it before, 1516
 He says to the barons: "Come forward.
 Take the writing that it bears
 Which Our Lord has sent us,
 And have it read aloud." 1520
 They do so, and they find the laws
 That Muhammad fabricated
 Through his guile and handiwork:
 Let baptism no longer be administered 1524
 To man nor marriage
 Nor any other of the sacraments.
 Let there be circumcision
 And animal sacrifices, 1528
 And let a sole woman have ten husbands
 And a sole man, ten wives.
 And let them compel the peoples from all the countries
 That they can subjugate through warfare 1532
 To adopt their religion.
 Let them hand over straightway to be tortured
 Those who are unwilling, in spite of force

Or other means, to adhere to it 1536
 So that they may be slain and quashed
 If their freedom is not bought;
 Or let them be placed in a dark prison
 And be subjected to slavery, 1540
 Women and children likewise,
 From generation to generation as long as they live.²⁹
 And I shall pass over in silence I do not know how many
 Other laws that I mentioned to you, 1544
 For it seems to me exceedingly tiresome
 To say the same thing so many times.
 But no one could describe to you
 Or recount or tell fully 1548
 The praises that they voice
 For having such a godly man as their own.
 They believe him to be much holier
 Than the Roman pontiff. 1552
 They think him to be most honest.
 They praise the bull's beauty:
 On it there is neither filth nor spot;
 It was not fed from a manger.³⁰ 1556
 Its color is as white as snow,
 And its haunches are not skinny.
 They see it to be gentle and tame;
 In short, they believe it 1560
 To have descended directly from heaven.
 For a week the knights
 Give themselves over to great rejoicing.
 Then each, after taking his leave, returns 1564
 Home most happy.
 All alone Muhammad, who is versed in wrongdoing,

²⁹ The law given in vss. 1531-42 is absent from the *Otia*. See the Introduction, pp. 7-8, and Koran 2.256.

³⁰ *Crache*, vs. 1556, is a variant of *creche*, 'manger,' at vs. 888, or it may be Picard *craiche* / *crache* (from **crassia*), 'grease'—in the latter case, this verse would mean: "it was not raised in filth." See Charles Théodore Gossen, *Grammaire de l'ancien picard*, Bibliothèque Française et Romane, Series A, 19 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970), pp. 53 and 106-07.

Ties up his bull again
 So that no one sees it. 1568
 He nourishes it well all its life
 So that it never eats nettles—
 On the contrary, he gives it a good deal of wine and bread
 In both the evening and morning. 1572
 When anyone asks him, "What has become
 Of the bull which was so fair?"
 He replies: "It returned to heaven
 Whence it had descended to us." 1576
 They trust his word completely.
 Thus he dupes the foolish people
 So that they indeed think the animal
 To be in the glory of paradise 1580
 Where it will remain forever.
 They believe that Muhammad stays behind
 So that everyone may amend therefrom
 And God may maintain His firmament.³¹ 1584
 After some time has passed in this manner,
 They consider themselves indeed to be
 Most prosperous and well-off.
 One very often observes great discomfort 1588
 On the heels of great pleasure.
 The Persians see that Muhammad possesses
 Their territory through fraud,
 But he will not continue to hold it without a war, 1592
 For very well armed
 They come most swiftly
 To attack Muhammad's people.
 They make their horses gallop and rush forward, 1596
 They make the air resound and din with them;
 They destroy Muhammad's lands

³¹ In vss. 1582-84, *Mahommet cuident remanoir / Que tous li mondes en ament / Et Dex taigne son firmament*, the sense is unclear. The corresponding passage in the *Otia*, vss. 883-84, indicates that Muhammad's followers believed him to be the master of the earth in the same way that God rules the heavens, *astra*.

With Greek fire³² and the sword.
 The people of Idumæa are afraid. 1600
 Nonetheless, they prepare to do battle.
 The knights take counsel among themselves
 And declare that they will go to Muhammad
 To tell him about the matter. 1604
 As soon as they go before him
 And speak about it,
 He says to them: "The Persians
 Are strong, arrogant, and cruel. 1608
 You will not be able to resist them
 Or withstand their heavy assault,
 And they have some just claim in this war.
 I advise that through a treaty 1612
 A portion of the territory be surrendered to them."
 But Muhammad finds no one in the assembly
 Who agrees to this,
 For they would rather lose their lives 1616
 Or slay their enemies
 Than be enslaved by them;
 And they say: "If in this manner
 We offer them anything, 1620
 They will consider us worthless cowards.
 Afterwards they will demand our other holdings.
 Therefore they will take away our lands from us
 And will want to enslave us all— 1624
 God forbid
 That we should thus suffer death in life!
 It is better for us to deal strong blows there

³² Ziiolecki remarks, pp. 73-74, that the allusion to Greek fire is anachronistic and out of place in land warfare. It is believed that in 673 Greek fire was used successfully for the first time by the Byzantines against a Muslim flotilla during a siege of Constantinople. Guy Raynaud de Lage notes that Western Christians were aware of Greek fire in the form of various projectiles at least as early as 1099—*Le roman de Thèbes*, CFMA, 94 and 96, 2 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1966-1971), vol. 2, p. 150. See, also, *Roman de Thèbes* (c. 1150), vs. 4804, for the use of Greek fire in a fictional siege of Thebes.

And sustain the onslaught 1628
 Than to be dishonored in that way.
 Let it come about because of our keen iron weapons,
 Our swords, spears,
 Pikes, and lances, 1632
 That all marvel at it.
 We should prepare well
 To safeguard our women and children
 And charge our enemies." 1636
 The knights approve of the speech—
 No one argues against it.
 Together they ask Muhammad
 To aid them so that they may be rallied 1640
 By him in the battle,
 For they believe him to be worth much to them.
 Muhammad answers them:
 "Old age has so undone me 1644
 That I have lost a good deal of my strength.
 Therefore it is right for me to excuse myself from this.³³
 And God's will is opposed,
 So I could by no means do it. 1648
 Perhaps I would be more detrimental
 Than helpful to you."
 After he speaks, they are silent;
 They hardly know how to reply to him. 1652
 Nevertheless, they tell Muhammad:
 "You have rejected our plea
 And said that you are too old.
 Some youths are wise, 1656
 But their prowess is insufficient.
 Yet you know the practices
 That befit knighthood.
 Be present among our troops 1660

³³ If Gautier of Compiègne's source for this imaginary war with the Persians is Anastasius Bibliothecarius' record of 631-632 A.D. (see the Introduction, p. 15), then Muhammad's death, rather than age, might explain his absence from the battlefield.

So as to honor your knights.
 A lord should support his army.
 You are yet strong and daring
 In deeds and even wiser in speech. 1664
 You are still in the prime of life.
 Your great renown is widespread.
 If someone wages war against you, you should
 Defend yourself, wherever it may be, 1668
 Without fear, since you taught us
 All about using valuable arms.³⁴
 A thousand good knights are worth more
 Than four thousand bad ones. 1672
 If God is ill-disposed towards us,
 We shall humble ourselves,
 And God's compassion is so great
 That He will forgive us our sins. 1676
 He welcomes the sinner gladly
 When he desires to return to Him.
 Thus He forgave Saint Peter.
 He goads more than He strikes. 1680
 Thus Saint Mary Magdalene
 Was cleansed of her sins.
 Because of his repentance, Theophilus
 Was taken back from the devil.³⁵ 1684
 All those about whom I spoke committed sins,
 But they repented sincerely,
 And because of this God pardoned them
 And gave them His grace besides. 1688
 One should have faith in Him.
 We shall do penance for our sins—

³⁴ At vss. 1669-70, *quant d'armes le pris / Nous avés tout l'usage appris* makes no sense as it stands. I have read *le pris as de pris*.

³⁵ The legendary sixth-century Theophilus was a churchman who submitted to the devil. After his repentance, the Virgin removed him from the devil's power. From among the many works on Theophilus, see Rutebeuf's miracle play (1261?) *Le miracle de Théophile*, in *Œuvres complètes de Rutebeuf*, ed. E. Faral and J. Bastin, 2 vols. (Paris: A. et J. Picard, 1959-1962), vol. 2, pp. 167-203.

We shall do so just as you say.
 A man without hope is worthless. 1692
 The guilt of the people of Nineveh
 Was thus forgiven
 Owing to the virtue of contrition
 And holy confession.³⁶ 1696
 If God prefers the sacrifice
 Of a bull, goat, or heifer,
 Let us do so piously
 In order to have His mercy. 1700
 Since we are willing to do such a thing,
 How could you tell us
 That you ought not help us?
 If you please, at least 1704
 Accompany our households.
 Let our possessions, children, wives,
 Maidens, and ladies
 Be placed in your keeping. 1708
 Remain with them in a place
 From which you will see the battle well
 And can advise us.
 We want to strive hard 1712
 And sustain the combat.
 If we must perish there,
 We indeed grant people leave to say
 That it came about through our folly. 1716
 And should God so honor us
 That we are able to defeat them,
 We shall increase your worth because of it.”
 While weeping Muhammad yields to them 1720
 And says that he will be present there
 And will guard their possessions well.
 They fix the day for the battle.
 One side and the other 1724
 Arm themselves well and richly.

³⁶ See Jonah 3.1-10.

But the Persian knights
 Have already seized many spoils.
 Those who are not dead or captured 1728
 Come on strong horses,
 And the Persians encamp
 In a fortified place that they reconnoitered.
 They pitch many pavilions and tents 1732
 And unfurl numerous standards
 Painted in various manners:
 There are beasts of many designs.
 We shall now speak about the other side: 1736
 In breadth and depth and all around,
 Muhammad's vassals
 And the knights of his domain are assembled
 Together in the summoned host 1740
 Armed and in battle formation.
 In their tents they leave
 Their wives with their families.
 At that time they used to take their entire households 1744
 Into the region where they warred.
 Serving as their rear guard,
 Muhammad takes care of their possessions—
 Gold and sapphires and chrysolites 1748
 And other choice gems.
 They used to take their wealth with them
 When they went off to deadly war.
 The sun rises on the day 1752
 The battle is to take place in the open fields.
 Earlier the Persians rose
 And armed themselves.
 They arrange their squadrons 1756
 And mount their horses.
 The infantrymen, who are armed
 More lightly, go before.
 When they arrive at the designated place, 1760
 They sound shrill horns and bugles;
 Clarions and trumpets resound there.

In the melee they exchange powerful blows.
 The men and horses make such a din 1764
 As if the earth were falling
 Deep down into the abyss.
 They assail one another most vigorously
 With javelins, lances, swords, 1768
 Pikes, and studded maces.
 They shoot arrows, they hurl stones.
 The Persians slay Muhammad's troops
 With spiked clubs and maces 1772
 And gisarmes and battle-axes.
 Muhammad's soldiers deal them many blows in return:
 Among themselves they buy and sell one dead man for another.
 They split many shields and bucklers. 1776
 They defend themselves as best they can,
 But the Persians slay a large number of them:
 They topple them one upon the other,
 Open-mouthed, from their horses. 1780
 Blood flows down the plain.
 The weapons are stained with the gore of the dead.
 Lucifer profits greatly,
 For those who adhere to Muhammad's religion 1784
 And do not keep to God's law
 Fall headlong into hell.
 Muhammad, who is so skilled at guileful words and deeds,
 Retraces his steps. 1788
 He enters a ruined church
 And hastens to hide the possessions,
 From which he will give back entirely
 To each heir his portion 1792
 At the proper time and place.
 He closes the door and leaves the church.
 He returns without delay
 To the children, aged, and women 1796
 Who cannot bear arms.
 He preaches to them grandly
 And so sets about comforting them:

"Because you are unable to bear arms, 1800
 You have been placed in my keeping.
 Going against my prohibition, my vassals
 Have attacked their enemies—
 It is not good to do everything that one imagines. 1804
 I would not have forbidden them to do this
 Had I not learned from God
 That it was contrary to His will.
 I know well that all of them will be slain. 1808
 But you who have done no wrong
 In either word or deed
 Will have God's pardon,
 And you will give your children in marriage. 1812
 Our Lord wishes that henceforth
 A sole man have ten wives
 And a woman, ten husbands,
 For he reaps more who sows more. 1816
 And know that Our Lord
 Will no longer consider this adultery,
 For just as land that is tilled better
 Yields more produce and grain, 1820
 Likewise they will marry,
 And many children will be born.
 If one husband is of a cold nature,
 Which is very detrimental to procreation, 1824
 Another will have a warm constitution:
 Thus the wife will bear fruit,
 And no married woman will be barren any longer."
 While he is instructing them, 1828
 Behold! a messenger arrives
 Who, maddened with grief, says
 That the Persians put to death
 And slew all their host 1832
 Excepting himself,³⁷ so that he might deliver the message.

³⁷ This sole survivor may correspond to the only amir who escaped death in a battle according to Anastasius Bibliothecarius' record of 631-632 A.D. (see the Introduction, p. 15.)

The weeping and anguish recommence.
 The ladies, who are grief-stricken,
 Wring their hands in their tents. 1836
 The living mourn their dead friends,
 They swoon with tears of grief.
 Muhammad says: "Leave off weeping.
 It is better to give thanks and pray that God, 1840
 Who saved and protected us
 And thus ordained this,
 Be so kind as to guide us
 And restore and hand over our possessions." 1844
 He leads them towards the ruined church;
 He takes pains in searching for the entrance:
 He goes forward and back again,
 And then this way and then that, 1848
 Just as if he knew nothing about it
 Or had never been there.
 At last he finds the entrance.
 He blesses God's power 1852
 As if it were through Him that he found
 The possessions. Subsequently, they enter without delay.
 He points out to them the sealed property.
 Each recognizes well his token 1856
 Among those with which the purses are marked.
 He labors so much in searching
 That to each he indicates unerringly
 And delivers what is his. 1860
 They cross themselves in amazement
 At the wisdom that Muhammad possesses.
 Everyone submits to his authority,
 For he makes peace with the Persians 1864
 So that they leave them entirely undisturbed.
 Great and lowly alike
 Get back all their goods.
 The women marry 1868
 According to the laws that he gave.
 Thus the religion multiplies.

All honor and esteem him.
 In the country he is so renowned 1872
 That he is called and named a god.
 Subsequently, while he lived, they had no war.
 This earthen vessel is a weak thing.
 Death claims its due 1876
 Of Muhammad and so ends his life.
 Because he clung to sin,
 Dead he falls into hell.
 Souls would be most fortunate 1880
 If they were to sojourn for a day
 With God in paradise
 Before they left their bodies
 And were they to endure for a week 1884
 The least grievous pain of hell:
 They would wholly eschew vice,
 The sins of pride and avarice,
 Lust and gluttony 1888
 And deadly anger and envy;
 They would cherish God above all things
 And would do as He commands.
 Nor would Muhammad have fashioned 1892
 Or brought forth his new religion,
 On which he labored through great pride.
 His soul suffers much in hell.
 Nevertheless, the crazed people 1896
 Believe that he ascended into heaven.³⁸
 They honor his cadaver greatly
 And embalm it with a very costly unguent
 So that it can neither rot nor disintegrate. 1900
 They do not venture to place it in the ground.
 They have forged an iron sarcophagus
 Wherein they lay Muhammad's corpse.

³⁸ For Christian accounts—e.g., from the *Apology of al-Kindi*—of Muslims' alleged belief in Muhammad's posthumous ascension, see N. Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 127-29, 263, and 375. The subject of *The Book of Muhammad's Ladder* is the living Prophet's ascent to heaven.

They build a vaulted maisonette	1904
Of lodestone constructed	
So that they leave the body, which is attached	
To nothing, in its center:	
It remains in the air with no connecting medium,	1908
But the lodestone by its nature alone	
Holds it up	
Equally on all sides	
Without, however, touching it at all.	1912
His people do not wish to admit this;	
They say instead that Muhammad miraculously	
Bears himself up in his dwelling.	
There two candles with an extraordinary property	1916
And candlesticks of gold	
Continue burning forever.	
They are worth an enormous fortune,	
For they cannot be extinguished.	1920
This is by no means because God loves Muhammad.	
On the contrary, that property was given them	
On the glorious day	
When God was born in Bethlehem:	1924
He was illuminated by three such candles,	
Which are of great worth and excellence.	
The third one is in Constantinople	
At the tomb of Saint Sophia,	1928
A virgin who lived virtuously. ³⁹	
I do not know through what accident	

³⁹ Ziiolecki, p. 79, points out a reference to the inextinguishable candle in Constantinople and the two in Mecca in the French "Poème sur la vie de Marie et de Jésus," which is posterior to Alexandre du Pont's romance. The anonymous verse *La belle Hélène de Constantinople* from the early fourteenth century repeats the tale of the three candles, and an anonymous prose rewriting of this epic poem mentions a fourth such candle in Arras—"La belle Hélène de Constantinople." *Chanson de geste du XIV^e siècle*, ed. Claude Roussel, Textes Littéraires Français, 454 (Geneva: Droz, 1995), vss. 9169-93 and 12673-96 and p. 791, n. 9170. There never was a tomb of St. Sophia in Constantinople. *La belle Hélène* in verse and Jacopo da Varezze's *Legenda aurea* (before 1264) relate different legends of St. Sophia.

1932

1936

1940

1944

1948

1952

1956

1956

1956

⁴¹ Marbodius' early-twelfth-century *De gemmis* in Latin verse mentions pyrope while describing the red gem called *ceraunius*—see *Liber de gemmis*, in *Venerabilis Hildeberti primo Cenomanensis episcopi deinde Turonensis archiepiscopi opera omnia tam edita quam inedita accesserunt Marbodi Redonensis episcopi ... opuscula*, ed. J.-J. Bourassé, *Patrologia Latina*, 171 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1854), col. 1757. For carbuncle, see col. 1754. *Pyropum* or *pyropus* was used to describe the fiery color of red gems or an alloy of gold and bronze, as in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* 16.20.6.

Because the word 'Mecca' means
 A woman who commits adultery,⁴²
 For Muhammad dreamed up adultery 1960
 In the religion that he fabricated,
 Just as he exemplified it:
 He committed adultery along with the others.
 The vile sin of wantonness 1964
 Still continues there today.
 People were wont to name things
 Formerly by reason
 Of a good or bad occurrence 1968
 So that it could be remembered
 Or on account of a prediction
 Which proved to be true.
 Egypt is called 'dark' 1972
 Because of what it did and its punishment.⁴³
 And the city of Babylon,
 For a certain, good reason,
 Is ill-famed owing to its conduct: 1976
 It is named Babylon because of it.
 'Babylon' means 'confusion.'⁴⁴
 This name was given it
 Because formerly people built there, 1980
 Through great pride and madness,
 The tower in order to climb high into paradise.
 But God changed their language
 Into more than sixty sorts: 1984
 When one of them asked for stones,
 Another brought him mortar.
 Thus the people were disheartened,

⁴² The Prophet's tomb is in Medina. Classical Latin *mæcha* or medieval Latin *mecha* = 'adulteress.' This fanciful etymology, which the romance poet takes from the *Otia*, also appears in Mark of Toledo's preface to his translation of the Koran, p. 261.

⁴³ See Exodus 10.21-23. As Michel and Reinaud point out, *Roman*, pp. 82-83, n. 2, Saints Jerome and Augustine relate Egypt's name to the Hebrew word for 'darkness.'

⁴⁴ See Genesis 11.9.

And everyone was quite dumbfounded. 1988
Afterwards they spread their diverse tongues
Into many different lands—
This is why there are so many languages.
Now I have explained to you the reason for it. 1992
Here ends *The Romance of Muhammad*,
Which was composed on the mount of Laon
In the year of the Incarnation
Of Our Lord Jesus Christ 1996
One thousand two hundred fifty-eight.

THE BOOK OF MUHAMMAD'S LADDER

This is the book called *halmaereig* [*al-mi'râj*] in Arabic, which means 'to ascend on high'¹ in French. And Muhammad produced this book and gave it that name, and therefore people call it so. And the book describes Muhammad's ascent, how he went up into heaven by means of a ladder, as you will hear hereafter, and saw all the wonders that God revealed to him, just as he himself tells and the book details. And Abraham, a Jew and physician, translated the book from Arabic into Spanish at the order of the noble lord Don Alfonso, by the grace of Our Lord God ever greater king of the Romans² and sovereign, moreover, of Castile, Toledo, León, Galicia, Seville, Córdoba, Murcia, Jaén, and Algarve; and he divided the book into eighty-five chapters so that the matters contained therein could be more easily pointed out to those who inquire about them and their questions might be answered more readily. And just as Abraham translated the book from Arabic into Spanish, likewise I, Bonaventura da Siena, a notary and scrivener of my lord the forenamed king, rendered it on his order in its entirety from Spanish into French according to my limited knowledge of the latter. And I translated the book most gladly for two reasons: one is in order to fulfill my lord's commission, and the other is so that people may learn about Muhammad's life and knowledge and so that after they have heard and become acquainted with the errors and unbelievable things that he recounts in this book, the legitimate Christian religion and truth which is in [Christ] will thus be more fitting and pleasing to embrace and keep to for all those who are good Christians. And if my translation into French has any fault, so that it is not rendered as correctly as it should be, I indeed ask all those who know proper French to pardon me for it, since it is better for them to have it thus than not to have it at all.

¹ *Al-mi'râj* means 'ladder' or 'stairs.'

² For Alfonso X the Wise's unsuccessful efforts beginning in 1256 to gain the imperial throne, see J. F. O'Callaghan, *The Learned King*, pp. 198 ff.

The first chapter tells how the angel Gabriel went to Muhammad and what he said to him.

Chapter two speaks of an animal that Gabriel led to Muhammad, upon which he went to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Chapter three tells how while traveling in this manner, Muhammad heard voices which called him, and what Gabriel told him about them.

Chapter four relates how Muhammad was present in the aforesaid temple and said his prayers there and what he found.

Chapter five describes the nature of the ladder by means of which Muhammad ascended into heaven.

Chapter six tells how as he was climbing the ladder, Muhammad saw a large angel in the air, and what he told Muhammad about him and his people.

Chapter seven reports how Muhammad learned that the said angel was the Angel of Death, and the things which he asked him, and what he answered him.

Chapter eight relates how the Angel of Death performs his function in regard to good souls and bad ones.

Chapter nine tells how Muhammad saw an angel with a rooster's face and another of whom one half consisted of fire and the other, of snow, and what they were doing.

Chapter ten reports how Muhammad saw the guardian of hell, and what he said to Muhammad about his people.

Chapter eleven relates how Muhammad asked the aforesaid guardian about several matters, and how he answered him.

Chapter twelve recounts how Muhammad entered into the first heaven

and what he discovered there.

Chapter thirteen tells about the second heaven.

Chapter fourteen describes the third heaven.

Chapter fifteen talks about the fourth heaven.

Chapter sixteen reports on the fifth heaven.

Chapter seventeen describes the sixth heaven.

Chapter eighteen tells about the seventh heaven.

Chapter nineteen reports on the eighth heaven.

Chapter twenty relates how Our Lord God spoke to Muhammad, and how he saw His throne.

Chapter twenty-one speaks of how Muhammad saw the angels who hold up Our Lord's throne.

Chapter twenty-two recounts how Muhammad saw corps of angels in the heaven where the aforesaid throne is.

Chapter twenty-three reports how Muhammad saw the angels called cherubim, and about their shape.

Chapter twenty-four relates how Muhammad saw among the angels rivers of different sorts and mountains of snow.

Chapter twenty-five tells how Muhammad saw an enormous sea where there were angels and rivers surrounding this heaven.

Chapter twenty-six recounts how Our Lord God made many worlds and kinds of creatures.

Chapter twenty-seven describes a white region that Our Lord made for His use, and the creatures present there.

Chapter twenty-eight tells how Muhammad saw again in one moment what he had seen earlier at his leisure.

Chapter twenty-nine relates how Muhammad saw the rooster which was near Our Lord, and what it was doing.

Chapter thirty tells how Muhammad saw the wall of paradise, and what it was like, and how he entered therein.

Chapter thirty-one reports how Muhammad questioned Gabriel about the aforesaid garden, and what he answered him.

Chapter thirty-two tells how Muhammad asked Gabriel about the distance from the first heaven down to earth and about other matters besides.

Chapter thirty-three describes one of the gardens, where Adam was created, and the rivers which are there.

Chapter thirty-four tells about all the gardens and what each of them is named and several other [matters].

Chapter thirty-five speaks about the nature of the ladies present in the aforesaid gardens and what they do.

Chapter thirty-six describes the nature of one of the gardens named *Gennet hanaym* [*Jannat an-na'im*].

Chapter thirty-seven reports on the joy and boon that those in the said [*Gennet*] *hanaym* have.

Chapter thirty-eight tells what the people in paradise do after they have eaten.

Chapter thirty-nine describes the nature of a tree in paradise, and it is called *thube* [*tûbâ*].

Chapter forty talks about another tree where those in paradise gather to hear what an angel-storyteller recounts to them and the gifts that Our Lord sends them.

Chapter forty-one relates how Our Lord revealed Himself to those who went to see [Him] and what He said and gave to them.

Chapter forty-two recounts how those who go to paradise find litters upon palfreys and how they enter therein.

Chapter forty-three describes the rivers, mountains, gardens, and fountains of paradise.

Chapter forty-four speaks of the trees in the aforesaid gardens and the pavilions and ladies who are there.

Chapter forty-five relates how Muhammad came upon the guardian of paradise, and what the latter told and showed him.

Chapter forty-six describes a river surrounding all the gardens, and the pavilions and ladies present there.

Chapter forty-seven tells how angels lead the said ladies to their husbands in paradise.

Chapter forty-eight describes a tree made up entirely of a single pearl and a fountain that springs from its base.

Chapter forty-nine reports how Muhammad received the Koran from Our Lord's Own hand.

Chapter fifty relates how Our Lord reduced for Muhammad the prayers with which He had charged him.

Chapter fifty-one tells how Muhammad entreated Our Lord regarding the fasts with which He had charged him, and how He lessened them.

Chapter fifty-two speaks about four pots given to Muhammad from which to drink and their meaning.

Chapter fifty-three relates how Muhammad was led to the lowest garden and what he found there.

Chapter fifty-four tells how Muhammad saw the first region of hell and the things present there.

Chapter fifty-five describes the second region.

Chapter fifty-six tells about the third region.

Chapter fifty-seven speaks about the fourth region.

Chapter fifty-eight describes the fifth region.

Chapter fifty-nine reports on the sixth region.

Chapter sixty tells about the seventh region.

Chapter sixty-one describes a pit completely filled with fire which is near hell, and what this fire will do when Judgment Day approaches.

Chapter sixty-two relates how Our Lord fixed the said seven regions of hell as they are.

Chapter sixty-three tells how Muhammad asked Gabriel about the power that these things will have on Judgment Day, and what he answered him in this regard.

Chapter sixty-four reports another question that Muhammad asked Gabriel about the aforesaid seven regions, and his answer.

Chapter sixty-five tells how Our Lord God revealed and presented faith and to whom.

Chapter sixty-six relates how people will gather on Judgment Day and in what manner they will arrive.

Chapter sixty-seven tells how Our Lord will pass sentence on Judgment Day.

Chapter sixty-eight reports how Muhammad asked Gabriel if the heavens, regions, and other things are joined to one another or not, and how he answered him.

Chapter sixty-nine tells how Muhammad asked Gabriel whether or not there are men beyond Kaf [Qâf] Mountain and about many other matters, and how he answered.

Chapter seventy describes how Our Lord distributed His gifts among the creatures.

Chapter seventy-one relates how Muhammad saw hell, its gates, and many other things present there.

Chapter seventy-two recounts how Gabriel told Muhammad the manner in which the pains of hell are distributed.

Chapter seventy-three describes a most wondrous beast that God will have come before Him on Judgment Day.

Chapter seventy-four reports what Muhammad asked Gabriel about the said beast, and how he replied.

Chapter seventy-five relates the answer that Gabriel gave Muhammad when he asked whether Judgment Day will be long or short.

Chapter seventy-six tells about the nature of Azirat [as-Sirât] Bridge, over which all must pass, and how they will be questioned in crossing.

Chapter seventy-seven speaks of the mountains surrounding the said Azirat Bridge and of the rivers of fire and many other things there.

Chapter seventy-eight recounts how Muhammad's people will be divided into companies and how they will cross the said bridge.

Chapter seventy-nine relates how Muhammad saw the different sorts of torments that the sinners were suffering in hell.

Chapter eighty tells how Gabriel left Muhammad and commended him to God, and how Muhammad returned to his home.

Chapter eighty-one reports how Muhammad went to the mosque to relate all that he had seen to the men of Quraysh.

Chapter eighty-two tells how Muhammad recounted all the things he had seen to the men of Quraysh, and how they answered him.

Chapter eighty-three relates how the men of Quraysh tested Muhammad and asked him for information about their caravan.

Chapter eighty-four reports how Muhammad answered the men of Quraysh and told them the truth concerning their caravan.

Chapter eighty-five relates how Muhammad had all the aforesaid matters put in writing, and so he had this book made thereof and named it *hal-maereig*.³

³ Abraham, who divided the book into chapters, almost certainly created these headings.

THIS IS THE FIRST CHAPTER DIVISION

Let all those in the [four] parts of the world—namely, the east, west, north, and south—who see and hear this precious book know that while I, Muhammad, son of Abdillehe [‘Abdallâh], born in Arabia in the city of Mecca to the noble lineage of Arabs called Quraysh, enlightened by the grace of God, was in my house at Mecca, and I lay in bed beside my wife, named Omheni [Umm Hâni’];⁴ and I had long lay awake thinking about Our Lord’s religion and, thereupon, began to sleep a bit; at that moment lo! the angel Gabriel came and revealed himself to me in this form: his face was whiter than milk or any snow whatever; his hair was redder than very red coral; his eyebrows were quite broad; he had a very beautiful and well-shaped mouth; his teeth were most white and bright; and he was dressed in garments of incomparable whiteness, very richly embroidered with pearls and precious stones. And, furthermore, he was girded with two belts, one of which he wore across his chest and the other around his waist, as men are wont to gird themselves. The belts were of marvelously worked pure gold, and each was more than a good palm in breadth. His hands were as red as fire, and his wings and feet were greener and brighter than emeralds, and his whole form was enveloped in a light that shone from the east all the way to the west. In this manner and shape the angel Gabriel came to me, Muhammad, and told me: “Muhammad, you who are the Messenger of Our Lord, rise and prepare yourself and gird on your sash and cover your head and body with your white shawl. Then you will follow me, for Our Lord God wishes to reveal to you tonight very great wonders regarding His mysteries and His power.” And when I heard this and recognized that he was Gabriel, I rose straightway from my bed and prepared myself exactly as he had ordered me. And when I was ready, I went to the door of my house where he was waiting for me, and I bowed to him humbly.

⁴ Umm Hâni’, the daughter of Abû Tâlib, was Muhammad’s paternal cousin, not his wife. See the report by Umm Hâni’ on the *isrâ’* in Ibn Ishâq, p. 184. The Arabic term for ‘daughter of a paternal uncle’ is sometimes used to designate a wife—*Le livre de l’échelle de Mahomet*, p. 97, n. 4.

CHAPTER TWO⁵

After I, Muhammad, bowed before Gabriel, as you heard and I related to you, then I looked and saw that he was holding by the reins an animal which he had brought me named Alborak [al-Burâq] in Arabic, and that means 'male mallard'⁶ in French. And this animal was of the following form: it was larger than an ass and smaller than a mule; it had a man's face; its hair was of pearls, and the mane, of emeralds, and the tail, of rubies; its eyes were brighter than the sun; it had feet and hooves like a camel's; and all its color was of pure light. And it wore a saddle so beautiful and so richly and marvelously decorated with pearls and precious stones that no one could describe it; and the saddlebow of this piece of work was of pure gold, and the leathers in the saddle were of God's glory,⁷ and the harness was entirely of emeralds, rubies, and topaz, and the stirrups, of saffron. I saw also that the animal was completely surrounded by angels who guarded it. Then Gabriel said to me: "Muhammad, mount this animal and ride it." When I approached in order to mount, the beast refused to permit it. Seeing this, Gabriel said to it: "Alborak, hold still and let this man mount you, for I swear by the name of God that never has such a man ridden you, nor will another such ride you as long as the world remains." And it asked: "Who is he then?" Gabriel answered it by saying: "This is Muhammad, the Messenger of God and the great Prophet." When Alborak heard this, it held quite still, without moving; and thereupon I mounted. Gabriel held the stirrup for me and then told me: "Now go, Muhammad, with Our

⁵ I have reduced this and all subsequent chapter headings, which begin with "Ce est le devisement du" ("This is the division of the"), to the chapter number.

⁶ Al-Burâq is an ass-like creature associated in Islamic tradition with prophetic journeys—see *The Encyclopædia of Islam. New Edition*, vol. 1, pp. 1310-11, and J. Horowitz, "Muhammeds Himmelfahrt," *Der Islam* 9 (1919): 179-83. E. Cerulli attributes the erroneous translation as 'male mallard' to Abraham, who understood the written term *burâq*, from a root meaning 'to glitter, sparkle,' to refer to *buraka* or *burâka*, 'duck,' in the spoken Arabic dialect of Spain—*Il libro della scala*, p. 226, n. 9.

⁷ The most recent editors of the Latin version interpret *gloria Dei*, 'the glory of God,' to mean 'dazzling,' and they note that the Vulgate uses *gloria Dei* to translate the Greek term for 'rainbow'—*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 101, n. 8.

Lord's blessing, and may He aid and guide you everywhere you go." After he finished saying this, Alborak started out straightway, and it went so swiftly and gently that mortal mouth could not recount it. I took note of its pace and saw that its steps were so long that it was as far between one step and the next as the greatest distance a man could see. And it went towards the Temple in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER THREE

While I, Muhammad, was traveling on the said animal towards the Temple in Jerusalem, as you heard earlier, the holy angel Gabriel stayed constantly on my right telling me many good tidings that gave me great joy and pleasure in hearing them. And while I listened to the news that Gabriel was telling me and we were thus traveling together, there-upon I heard a voice which called me very gently a single time and said: "Ah, Muhammad." And I did not care to look in the direction from which the voice came, rather I continued on my way without answering at all. After I had gone a great distance forward, I heard another voice that called very loudly and twice said to me: "Ah, Muhammad, wait for me." I said nothing, nor did I look in the direction from which the voice came, rather I passed beyond it and kept to my course. Afterwards, when I had traveled another great distance forward, I perceived the most beautiful lady I had ever seen in my life clothed in a robe of all the colors one can imagine. This lady called out most gently three times saying: "Ah, Muhammad, wait for me a bit." Hearing this, I waited for her, and when she was near me and wished to speak to me further, with great disdain I left her behind and resumed my course. After a while Gabriel looked at me and said: "Muhammad, now I recognize indeed that you possess very great wisdom, and I shall tell you why. Know surely that the voice which first called you was the Jewish religion, and if you had answered it, all your people would have become Jews." And then Gabriel inquired thus: "Do you know whose was the second voice that called you?" I answered him: "No, as God knows." Gabriel said to me: "Know truly that it was the Christian religion, and if you had answered it, all your people would have become Christians." After he told me this, I said to him: "Gabriel, since you have revealed to me and assured me of these

two things, I pray you then to tell me who that beautiful lady was who last called me and wanted to speak with me." And Gabriel answered me and said: "Know, Muhammad, that the beautiful woman clad in every color is the world, which is filled with every pleasure. And since you waited and stopped for her, know truly that your people will have greater joy and delight than all other peoples who ever were or will be; but since you disdained her and did not wish to answer her, know that you will be freer of sin than all the other prophets who ever were or will be."⁸ When he finished saying this, he was silent, and he led me straight to the Temple of Jerusalem.⁹ When we arrived before the door of the Temple, he ordered me to descend there at a black stepping-stone where the prophets were wont to descend. And I got down, and Gabriel took Alborak and attached its reins to the said stone, and he took me by the hand and led me into the Temple.

CHAPTER FOUR

After I, Muhammad, entered the said Temple in the company of Gabriel, thereon I came upon all the prophets standing in a circle within the Temple whom God had made leave their tombs¹⁰ and go there to

⁸ Cf. another mystical test that Muhammad passes in chapter 52 and Ibn Ishâq, p. 182. The allusion to possible future prophets—i.e., after Muhammad, the seal of the prophets—here and in chapters 48 and 53 seems unorthodox. However, it only repeats the past-future formula from the first part of the same sentence.

⁹ Within the enclosure of Solomon's (or Herod's) temple are two Muslim structures: the seventh-century Dome of the Rock (called *Templum Domini* during the occupation of Jerusalem by the crusaders), under the dome of which is exposed the rock—the stepping-stone mentioned in the following sentence—that Jewish tradition identifies with the place where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac (or Ishmael according to the Koran 37.101-12); and the eighth-century al-Aqsâ Mosque, part of which the Knights Templars occupied for a time. According to the Koran 17.1 and a report by Ibn Ishâq, p. 181, on his night journey the Prophet went to the Masjid al-Aqsâ, the location and meaning of which are disputed—some have understood it to refer to heaven or a place near Mecca. Other reports by Ibn Ishâq specify the Temple of Jerusalem, p. 182.

¹⁰ Muhammad later meets several prophets in heaven. *Muhammad's Ladder* presents two different notions of what happens to the dead before Judgment Day: either they remain in their tombs awaiting resurrection or they

honor me. All stood waiting for me, and when they saw me, all began saying prayers. Then Gabriel told me: "Come forward, Muhammad, and say a prayer before the others, for you are the king of all prophets and lord of all peoples." When I heard this, I moved forward and said two rather short prayers, and then I rose to my feet, and immediately all the prophets greeted me, showed me great joy, honored me much, embraced me, and told me glad tidings of the great good that God had prepared for me and my people. And each inquired individually about my affairs, and every one of them showed me openly that he desired very much for Our Lord God to do me great good and honor. And so all prayed to Our Lord about it for my sake.

CHAPTER FIVE

After I, Muhammad, said my prayers in the aforesaid Temple with the prophets present who embraced and received me so honorably, as you heard, Gabriel took me by the hand and led me outside the Temple, and he showed me a ladder that extended from the first heaven all the way down to the ground where I stood. And it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. The feet of this ladder rested on the stepping-stone where I had descended earlier,¹¹ and the rungs of the ladder were as follows: the first was of ruby, the second, of emerald, the third, of white pearl, and each of the others consisted of a different sort of precious stone decorated more richly with pure gold and pearls than man's mind could imagine. It was completely covered in green samite brighter than any emerald, and, moreover, it was surrounded by angels who guarded it, and the brightness was so intense that one could hardly look at it. Then Gabriel took me by the hand, lifted me from the ground, set me on the ladder's first rung, and said to me: "Climb, Muhammad." And I climbed in the company of Gabriel, and all the angels who had been stationed to watch over the ladder accompanied me. And Gabriel reported to me very

go directly to heaven or hell where they are rewarded or punished—*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 107, n. 12.

¹¹ For Christian and Muslim traditions about a stone or stones in Jerusalem bearing Jesus' and Muhammad's footprints, vestiges of the ascent to heaven, see J. Horowitz, "Muhammeds Himmelfahrt," pp. 167-68.

glad tidings of the great good that Our Lord had prepared for me.

CHAPTER SIX

While I, Muhammad, was climbing the said ladder along with Gabriel, I looked then and saw in the air a very large angel seated on a throne, and he was holding in his hand a tablet that extended from the east to the west. On his right were many angels with faces as shining as the moon when it is full. And all this light was from God's glory. The angels were all clothed in green robes more brilliant than emerald, and they were more fragrant than musk or ambergris.¹² The aforesaid large angel had on his left many other angels who were blacker than ink, and their eyes were as red as fire, and they smelled foul, and their voices were louder than thunder, and all were awfully hideous. Gabriel said to me: "Go forward, Muhammad, and greet that large angel, for know indeed that he holds a very important place in the presence of Our Lord." Thereupon I went towards him and greeted him, and he returned the greeting, not with his mouth but with a movement of his head. I paid careful attention and saw that at one time this angel looked upon the tablet and at another, the world. I marveled greatly that he was so submissive to His Lord God. Gabriel spoke and said to the angel: "How is it that you do not answer and greet the best man in the world?" The angel asked: "Who is he then?" Gabriel answered him: "He is Muhammad, the Messenger of Our Lord." The angel said to Gabriel: "Has he already been sent?" and Gabriel answered him: "Yes, without a doubt." Straightway the angel greeted me and told me glad tidings of the great good that God had prepared for me, and he told me further that I was the most eminent and honored of all the messengers and the rightful lord of all peoples, and he entreated me to pray with him. Thereupon I stepped forward and knelt and said two rather brief prayers. Then I stood up, and immediately that angel and all the others who accompanied him greeted me. After they had done this, the large angel said to me: "Know, Muhammad, that your people will be the last to remain, and they will

¹² Old French *ambre*, or Latin *ambra*, here means musk-scented ambergris rather than amber. *Ambre* in the former sense occurs in classical French poetry. See, also, *ambre / ambar* in DuCange's *Glossarium*, vol. 1, p. 219.

endure on earth longer than all the others, for Our Lord God loves greatly the nations of your people because they flee evil and do good."

CHAPTER SEVEN

After I, Muhammad, took note of what the aforesaid large angel told me about myself and my people, just as you heard, I asked Gabriel who this angel was. Gabriel answered me that he was the Angel of Death. Forthwith I went towards him and said to him: "Are you the Angel of Death?" He answered me: "Yes." Then I asked and entreated him to tell me how he drew the souls from men's bodies when they died. He answered me and said: "Know, Muhammad, that Our Lord has given me the function of drawing the souls from men's bodies from the time that Our Lord God created Adam, who was the first man, and placed him on earth up to the great Day of Judgment, so that no one will remain alive except Our Lord and me alone with Him; and, subsequently, Our Lord will draw forth my soul, and He alone will remain forever afterwards in everlasting life." After he told me this, I asked him another question and spoke thus: "When two men die at the same time, one in the east and the other in the west, how do you draw forth their souls simultaneously?" He answered me by saying: "Do you not see, Muhammad, that the whole world is before me so that nothing worth so much as a single farthing could conceal itself without my seeing it entirely? And since the whole world is very small before me, I have no difficulty in drawing the souls forth simultaneously, one here and the other there." Then I questioned him further in the following manner: "When there are great battles and many people die in them, how do you succeed in drawing out the souls at the same time?" And he answered me: "Know, Muhammad, that when this occurs just as you asked me, I then let out a very loud cry and call the souls together and have them come to me, and afterwards I seize them all." After he told me this, I asked him and said: "Please tell me, Angel of Death, when the souls are before you, how do you know and recognize which souls are to go to paradise and which should go to hell?" He answered me thus: "Do you not see, Muhammad, that all the names of the men who lived or are living or will live up to the end of the world are written on this tablet along with

the death that each of them must suffer and, also, the good and ill that God has prepared for them according to what each deserves? Therefore I know well who should go to paradise or to hell."

CHAPTER EIGHT

After the aforesaid large angel replied to me, Muhammad, concerning these matters about which I had questioned him, just as you heard above, he spoke to me further as follows: "Know, Muhammad, that when a man who is to go to paradise nears death, I send him some of these angels on my right who are very beautiful and wondrously fragrant; they speak to him most sweetly and relate to him very good tidings of the great compassion of Our Lord God; and they draw forth his soul most gently and bring it to me. And when those who bring me the soul are near, one of them comes forth and informs me, and I then extend my right hand and take the soul and give it to the most beautiful and fragrant of these angels who surround me, and he takes it and carries it from one heaven to another until he comes before Our Lord. And straightway Our Lord orders an angel of light to take the soul and place it in the throat of an entirely green bird which carries it into paradise. And the soul of the just man arrives there in the manner I related to you. But know that when a sinner is about to die, I send him some of the other angels on my left who are very ugly and hideous to behold, and they address him most harshly and relate to him very bad and frightening tidings, and they draw forth his soul quite pitilessly and bring it to me. When the bearers are near me, one of them comes forward to inform me. Thereupon I extend my left hand and seize the soul very angrily and give it to the most ugly, hideous, and malodorous of the angels surrounding me, and he carries it to heaven immediately. But when he arrives there, the gates of heaven are closed to the soul and do not wish to admit it, just as Our Lord says in the Koran: 'The gates of heaven will not be opened for sinners.'"¹³

¹³ Koran 7.40. Most of the Koranic passages in the Latin and French translations are paraphrases.

CHAPTER NINE

Then, subsequent to the aforesaid occurrences, I, Muhammad, went forward and saw an angel who was so large that he held his head above heaven and his feet in the abyss. His hair was very long, and it lay upon his shoulders, and his wings were of all the most beautiful colors that any man has ever seen. And this angel had a rooster's shape. God had revealed to him all the hours at which prayers must be said. When it was time to pray, a voice came from heaven saying: "You, creature who are obedient to Our Lord God, I command you to praise Our Lord." And forthwith this angel said in a loud voice: "Blessed be God, the most holy King of angels and souls and all creatures." As soon as he said this, the roosters on earth heard what the angel uttered, and immediately all crowed and praised Our Lord and said in their crowing: "You men who submit to Our Lord, rise up and praise Him, for He has dominion over all things, and He made and created them." Afterwards I went further, and I saw another angel of whom one half consisted of fire and the other, snow. And these substances were joined so that neither did the fire destroy the snow nor the snow extinguished the fire. This angel praised Our Lord by saying: "Be blessed, God Who brought together fire and snow in this manner. And just as You joined them, I pray you to deign to unite the hearts of the people who are faithful to you." While he was saying these things, I saw another angel who was more wondrously large than I could venture to describe, and he possessed this great size through the power of Our Lord. I went straight to him and greeted him, and he did not answer me because he was praying. Gabriel said to him: "How is it that you do not greet the best man in the world?" And the angel answered him: "Who is the man about whom you speak?" Gabriel said: "He is Muhammad, whom you see here." The angel asked him: "Has he already been sent?" Gabriel answered him: "Yes, indeed." Forthwith this angel and the others whom I had seen earlier greeted me and told me glad tidings of the great good that God had prepared for me.

CHAPTER TEN

After Gabriel and I, Muhammad, left the aforesaid angels, we went further. As we were proceeding, I looked and saw an extraordinarily large

angel who was sitting on a throne, and he held between his hands a very great pillar by means of which he would destroy heaven and earth were he to strike it with a single blow. When Gabriel saw this pillar, he immediately began to weep. Then I said to him: "Gabriel, why are you weeping?" He answered me: "Muhammad, do you know who that angel is?" And I told him: "No, as Our Lord God is aware." Thereupon Gabriel said to me: "Know, Muhammad, that this angel is the guardian of hell."¹⁴ When I heard this, I went towards him and greeted him, and he did not respond to me at all. Gabriel said to him: "How is it that you do not answer the best man who was ever sent forth?" The angel asked him: "Who is he then?" Gabriel answered him: "He is Muhammad, the great Messenger of Our Lord." The angel said: "Has he already been sent?" And Gabriel replied: "Yes." Forthwith the angel came to me and greeted me, and he told me that those of my people who go to hell will suffer less hardship than all the others.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

When the guardian of hell told me, Muhammad, what you heard concerning my people, I looked at his face and saw that he had a very sad expression, and I asked him why he was so downcast. He answered me by saying: "Know, Muhammad, that I grieve very much on account of people who disobey Our Lord, which they would not do if they willed, and for this reason I am sad." "Indeed," I said, "you speak truly. But I pray you to tell me one thing about which I shall ask you." And he said to me: "Gladly." "Do tell me then how hell is constituted and, also, the angels who are there, and what sort of life they lead." Immediately he began to speak thus: "Muhammad, know that when hell was first formed, Our Lord God kindled a fire on top of it for seventy thousand years so that it became completely red. And next He had another fire burn on top of it for the same length of time until it became entirely white. Afterwards He kindled yet a third fire on top of it for another seventy thousand years so that it became completely black and incom-

¹⁴ According to Ibn Ishâq, p. 185, he is called Mâlik. See Koran 43.77.

parably dark. And this fire burns [forever] from its own substance with a wondrous intensity, but it does not emit any flame at all. Regarding the angels present there about whom you ask, know that Our Lord created them wholly of fire, and they are sustained by fire; and if for a single hour they were to leave the flame, they would die straightway and could not live without it, exactly as fish could not without water. Furthermore, He created them mute and deaf, and He placed in their hearts more hardness and cruelty than could be told, so that they know how to do nothing except torment and harass sinners. Therefore God made them deaf and mute so they would hear neither the sinners' voices nor the cries that they make when they torture them. He made them so cruel that if by chance they saw the sinners showing any sign of humility, they would have no pity or concern at all for them or their humility. Apart from the affliction of hell fire that the sinners suffer, they have another very cruel punishment, for the angels present there torment them with enormous iron clubs and hammer them very hard because of the great cruelty that is in them, just as Our Lord says in the Koran: 'We placed Our strong and harsh and cruel angels in hell so that they might do Our bidding, and they obey Us in all that We order them to do.'"¹⁵ After the guardian related all these things to me, most terrified both I and Gabriel left him, and we proceeded until we arrived at the first heaven, and this is the heaven of the moon.

CHAPTER TWELVE

When I, Muhammad, arrived in the company of Gabriel at the aforesaid first heaven, we looked and saw that it consisted entirely of iron, and its thickness equaled the distance that could be covered in five hundred years, and there was an equal amount of space between this heaven and the second one. After we had observed this, Gabriel knocked at the gate, and immediately an angel¹⁶ came to us who was so large that his height equaled the distance one could cover in a thousand years, and he was of equal breadth. And we saw the gates of heaven, which were wondrously beautiful, and many angels guarding them who were clad very well and

¹⁵ Koran 66.6.

¹⁶ According to Ibn Ishâq, p. 185, he is called Ismâ'îl.

richly. Then Gabriel went to one of the gates in order to enter, and when he endeavored to do so, an angel said to him: "What do you want, Gabriel, and who is that man with you?" Gabriel answered him: "Accompanying me is Muhammad, the seal of all the prophets and lord of all the messengers, and we wish to enter therein." When he said this, the gates were immediately opened for us, and we went inside. After we had entered, all the angels present there greeted me and told me very good tidings, for which I was most happy. As they were relating these tidings to me, I looked and saw that they had men's faces and bodies in the form of cows and wings just like eagles'. And these angels numbered seventy thousand, [and each of them had seventy thousand] heads, and each head, seventy thousand horns, and each horn, seventy thousand knobs, and between one knob and the next was as much space as could be covered in forty years. I noted furthermore about these angels that each of the aforesaid heads had seventy thousand faces, and each face had seventy thousand mouths, and each mouth, seventy thousand tongues, and each of these tongues knew seventy thousand languages and praised Our Lord seventy thousand times a day. And when I, Muhammad, saw these things, I was most astonished by them. While looking at them thus, I then saw among the aforesaid angels two men who were seated on two thrones of light, and they were very handsome, marvelously well-formed with respect to their bodies and faces, and their hair was all white like snow, and their beards were large and white in like manner. Their clothes were so very white that one could hardly look at them, and an exceedingly great brightness surrounded their heads. After looking at them, I asked Gabriel who they were, and he answered me by saying: "Know, Muhammad, that the man seated on the lower throne is named Yoanna Ibm Sakaria, which means John [the Baptist], son of Zechariah, and he is one of Our Lord's prophets. The man who is seated higher is named Yça Ibm Mariem ['Îsâ Ibn Maryam], which means Jesus, son of Mary. And this Jesus is the spirit of God, and he was engendered by His Word." When I heard this, I went towards them and greeted them, and they asked Gabriel who I was, and Gabriel told them my name. Forthwith they greeted me and related to me glad tidings of the great good that God had prepared for me.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

After I, Muhammad, and Gabriel had observed the aforementioned things, we proceeded until we arrived at the second heaven. We found that it was made entirely of copper, and its thickness equaled the distance that could be covered in five hundred years, and there was just as much space between this heaven and the third one which followed. While we stood there, Gabriel knocked at the gate, and immediately an angel came and opened it for us. He was so large that he held his head in the seventh heaven and his feet at the bottom of the earth. And this angel took me by the hand and placed me inside the heaven. When I and Gabriel entered together, we looked and saw angels there whose bodies were seventy thousand times larger than those we had seen earlier in the first heaven. And I went towards them and greeted them. Thereupon they asked Gabriel who I was, and Gabriel told them that I was Muhammad. When they heard my name, it made them very joyful, and they said: "Has Muhammad already been sent?" And Gabriel answered them: "Yes." Without delay they greeted me and told me very good tidings of the great love that God had for me and of the great good that He wished to do for me. While they were telling me this news, I looked among them and saw a very handsome man wondrously well-formed in all respects, in the prime of life, not old, who was seated on a throne of light, and his hair and all his garments were of such pure light that one could hardly look upon him directly. He was so very beautiful to behold that no one could describe him. After examining him fully, I asked Gabriel who he was, and he answered me that he was Joseph, son of Jacob. When I heard this, I went towards him and greeted him, and he asked Gabriel who I was, and Gabriel told him that I was Muhammad. As soon as he heard this, he greeted me most cheerfully and told me very glad tidings of the great good that Our Lord had prepared for me. After he told me this, together I and Gabriel left him, and we proceeded until we came to the third heaven.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

After I, Muhammad, and Gabriel arrived together at the said third heaven, we discovered that it consisted entirely of silver, and it was as

thick as a five hundred years' journey, and an equal amount of space lay between this heaven and the fourth. Gabriel went to the gate and called. Without delay an angel came to us who was so large and strong that if one were to put the whole world and everything that is in it on the palm of his hand, he would never notice it. This angel opened the door for us, and we entered. When we were inside, we saw many angels who were wondrously large, and all had cows' faces and hands of light, and incessantly they praised Our Lord. When I saw them, I greeted them, and Gabriel informed them who I was. Then they asked Gabriel if I were that Muhammad who was supposed to be sent, and Gabriel told them: "Yes." They greeted me at once and related to me a part of the great good that God wished to do for me. While they were telling me this, I examined them carefully and saw that they were all arranged in ranks and were joined so tightly that one could not have placed a single hair between them. Further, they all held their heads bent towards the ground on account of the great fear that they had of God. They were so dutiful that if one of them went into the east or the west, none of the others would budge until he returned, nor would the rank that he had left close up in the least. And the said ranks moved continuously all around in a circle praising Our Lord and blessing His most holy name. After seeing this, I looked further and saw among these angels two old men seated on two thrones of light, and their heads were wrapped in cloth of pure light, and all their garments were of like manner; and they were the most beautiful thing to behold that has ever been seen. After looking at them for a long while, I asked Gabriel who they were. Gabriel answered me and said that one of the two men was Enoch and the other, Elijah¹⁷ and that Our Lord had raised them both on high, as it were, in heaven. Afterwards I looked and saw that they were praying with the angels and that they did nothing except pray to Our Lord God and praise Him; and they did not cease doing so even for the space of a single blink of the eye. But Gabriel did not fail on account of all this to approach them and tell them my name [and] business. And when they heard this, they greeted me and told me very glad tidings of the great good that Our Lord God had prepared for me. After they had told me this, together I and Gabriel left them, and we proceeded until we reached the fourth heaven.

¹⁷ Enoch: Genesis 5.18-24. Elijah: 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

After I, Muhammad, and Gabriel had arrived at the aforesaid fourth heaven, we found that it was made entirely of pure gold, and its thickness equaled the distance that could be covered in five hundred years, and between this heaven and the fifth which followed was an equal amount [of space]. Gabriel knocked at the gate, and at once an angel came to us who was so large that he held all the bodies of fresh water on the thumb of his right hand and all those of salt water on his left thumb. And this angel was made up wholly of light. When Gabriel told him that I was Muhammad, he opened the door for us immediately and greeted me, and I, him. When we were inside, we discovered there seventy thousand angels who all had faces like eagles', and each of these angels had seventy thousand wings, and each wing, seventy thousand feathers, and each feather was seventy thousand cubits long. While I was looking at the said angels, I observed and saw then among them a man of marvelously beautiful appearance seated on a throne of light, and he was clad in garments consisting entirely of pure light. And he had on his head a diadem of light which shone so brightly that one could look at it directly only with very great difficulty. After examining this man for a long time, I asked Gabriel who he was, and he answered me that he was Aaron. When he told me this, I went towards him and greeted him. He asked Gabriel who I was, and Gabriel told him my name. As soon as he heard this, he greeted me and related to me tidings of the good that God had prepared for me, which made me exceedingly joyful in my heart. When he finished relating this, I and Gabriel left him, and we proceeded until we came to the fifth heaven.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

After I, Muhammad, and Gabriel arrived at the aforesaid fifth heaven, we found that it consisted entirely of a single pearl which was wholly perfect and whiter than snow, and it was as thick as a five hundred years' journey, and there was an equal amount of space between it and the sixth heaven. While we stood there, Gabriel called at the gate. Immediately an angel whose whole being was of fire came to us, and he had seventy thousand arms, and on each arm were seventy thousand hands,

and on each hand, seventy thousand fingers, and each finger praised Our Lord seventy thousand times a day. And this angel opened the gate for us. When we were inside, we saw angels whose bodies were very nobly formed, but their faces were like vultures', and their wings shone with pure brightness. And these angels praised Our Lord incessantly, and they did not stop praising Him. Thereupon I approached them and greeted them. And when Gabriel told them that I was Muhammad, they greeted me without delay and related to me a part of the great honors that God wished to bestow upon me. Meanwhile I looked among them and saw a very handsome old man who was seated on a throne of light, and his head was wrapped in cloth consisting entirely of light, and he held a staff of light in his hand. When I saw him, I asked Gabriel who he was, and he answered me that he was Moses, the man who spoke to Our Lord. Hearing this, I approached him and greeted him. After Gabriel told him that I was Muhammad, he greeted me forthwith and related to me very glad tidings of the great good that God had prepared for me and my people. He told me this besides: "Know, Muhammad, that God wishes to impose upon you and your people long fasts and many prayers. But ask Our Lord if He will reduce them for you, because otherwise your people would not be able to endure them. Indeed, I myself was formerly in such great conflict with the sons of Israel regarding these matters that no one could describe it. And I entreated Our Lord much to lighten these things for me, but He never wished to do anything about it for my sake. Therefore I advise you, Muhammad, to labor so that your people will not be heavily burdened, for if you do so, your people will wish you well and will follow you wherever you want; and if not, know that they will not love you, rather they will hate you and will not believe at all what you say." And I, Muhammad, swear by the name of God that I never saw another man who had such great compassion for my people as did Moses, my brother. Thereupon I took leave of him, and I and Gabriel departed together and proceeded until we came to the sixth heaven.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

While I, Muhammad, and Gabriel were there, we found that the sixth heaven was as follows: it consisted entirely of an emerald so very green

that it surpassed all things in greenness, and it was as thick as a five hundred years' journey, and there was just as much distance between it and the seventh heaven. Then Gabriel knocked at the gate, and immediately an angel came to us who was seventy thousand times larger than any of the others whom we had seen previously. His great size was such that if he wished to do so, he could swallow all of heaven and earth without ever noticing it. This angel opened the gate for us and told us: "Enter in peace," and we entered. When we were inside, we saw angels who were seventy thousand times larger than all the others we had seen earlier. These angels had horses' faces, and all were armed, and each of them had seventy thousand horses, and each of the horses, seventy thousand saddles made entirely of emeralds, rubies, and pearls intermingled with gold and silver. And Gabriel's horse was among the others. The angels were arranged in battle lines, and their armor shone more intensely than could be described. I asked Gabriel who these angels were, and he answered me that they were the household of Our Lord. Straightway I greeted them, and they asked Gabriel who I was, and Gabriel told them. Then they said: "Has Muhammad, the great Messenger of Our Lord, already been sent?" and Gabriel told them: "Yes." They greeted me immediately and related to me many good tidings that made me very joyful. Afterwards I asked Gabriel why the angels were holding their saddled horses in front of them. And he told me: "Know, Muhammad, that this is at Our Lord's order, and when any of His servants has need of aid, I take as many of these angels as I require, and I go there. The horses do not lose their shoes, and their praise of Our Lord serves as the only food and drink that they need. And all these angels will aid you if you need them, and I, too, shall descend with them to aid you when you ask me." After he finished telling me this, I looked carefully and saw among the said angels a man seated on a throne of light, and he was completely enveloped in garments of light that shone more than the summer's sun, and he wore a crown of light on his head. Furthermore, he was entirely surrounded by angels who praised Our Lord together with him. I asked Gabriel who he was, and he answered me that he was Abraham, the friend of Our Lord.¹⁸ Hearing

¹⁸ The corresponding Latin passage reads *dei nuncius et amicus*, 'the messenger and friend of God.'

this, I went towards him and greeted him. Gabriel told him that I was Muhammad, and forthwith he greeted me and told me this: "Know, Muhammad, that Our Lord loves you much and has chosen you over the other messengers, and He loves your people much for reason of His love of you. And so I tell you that heaven is quite filled with these words: *Çohan halla bille dille ylle halla*,¹⁹ and this means 'Worship God, and to Him let us give thanks, for there is no other god besides Him, nor is there any other strength or power besides that of the most high and great God.'" Then Abraham entreated me to tell my people that they should say these words very often, for the more they say them, the more delight they will have in paradise, and, also, to tell them that paradise is fashioned in the following manner: all its walls are of pure gold up to the crenelles, which are of pure silver, and the cement with which the walls are worked is of musk. "And this paradise has been prepared for you and all those who will trust in you and keep to your religion." After he told me this, together I and Gabriel left him, and we proceeded until we arrived at the seventh heaven.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

After I, Muhammad, and Gabriel had arrived at the aforesaid seventh heaven, we looked and saw that it consisted entirely of a ruby brighter and redder than could be described. It was as thick as a five hundred years' journey, and there was an equal distance between it and the eighth heaven. After we had examined this, Gabriel went to the gate and summoned the porter. Forthwith an angel came to us whose being no one could describe or depict except God alone Who made and created him. The angel opened the gate for us, and we entered. After going inside, we found there angels who were of such very great size and wondrous appearance that I could not relate it, nor would I dare, because Our Lord God forbade me to speak about this matter to any living man. But I can indeed tell you this much about them: they all kept their eyes raised towards Our Lord, and they did nothing other than sing and praise Him.

¹⁹ This transliteration perhaps corresponds in part to *subhân Allâh, lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, 'glory to God, there is no god but God.' Apparently, the Spanish or Latin translator neglected to transcribe all of the Arabic passage.

As soon as they saw me, they raised their voices, and their singing was so great and loud that it seemed to me that all the angels I had seen in every one of the aforementioned heavens would swoon, as it were, and the heavens and the lands would all have heard it. Thereupon I started to weep, and Gabriel, too, along with me, because of the great fear that we had of Our Lord. While we were weeping thus, an angel then rose among them who was heaven's *halmohaden* [*al-mu'adhdhin*], an Arabic word meaning 'he who summons the Muhammadans when they ought to say their prayers.' As soon as he had risen to his feet, he began the summons to prayer and said: *Hallahu akibar*,²⁰ which means 'God is great.' Afterwards he said: *Le hille halla hilalla*,²¹ that is, 'There is no other god [besides God].' Then he said further: *Haxedu le halla hilalla*,²² and this means 'Bear witness that there is no other god besides God.' Subsequently he said: *Haxeduna Muhagmet raçur halla*,²³ which means 'Bear witness likewise that Muhammad is God's Messenger.' And he said further: *Haia laçala haya lalfala*,²⁴ meaning 'Come to your prayers and your salvation.' After he sang this, Gabriel summoned me and said: "Go forward, Muhammad, and pray, for God has raised you above all the other messengers and every one of those whom you saw in all the aforesaid seven heavens." Having heard this, I went forward, [and] on my elbows and knees, I said two short prayers. And at once all the angels whom I had seen in the said seven heavens fell on their faces and prayed with me. When I rose, they all rose and entreated Our Lord to bestow upon me greater good than He had prepared for me, and they told me very good tidings that made me most joyful. While they were relating these tidings to me, I looked among them and saw an old man seated on a throne of light, and he was dressed in garments of pure brightness, and he had on his head a crown entirely of like nature, and all his face shone with pure light. After examining him, I asked Gabriel who he was, and he told me that he was our father Adam, who was the

²⁰ *Allâhu 'akbar*.

²¹ *Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, 'there is no god but God.'

²² *Ashhadu lâ ilâha illâ 'llâh*, 'I bear witness that there is no god besides God.'

²³ *Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasûlu 'llâh*, 'I bear witness that Muhammad is God's Messenger.'

²⁴ *Hayya 'ala 's-salâh, hayya 'ala 'l-falâh*, 'come to prayer, come to salvation.'

first man. Straightway I greeted him. He asked Gabriel who I was, and Gabriel answered him that I was Muhammad. Immediately he greeted me, and he showed me signs of great love and honored me much. Afterwards he told me that Our Lord wished to bestow greater good and honor upon me than upon all the other men who ever lived or will live on earth. And he told me this besides: "Know, Muhammad, you who are the father of [my] children, that paradise is closed, and no one will enter it, neither prophet nor any other man, until you and your people are here, for such is the will of Our Lord God."²⁵ When he finished telling me this, he came to me and embraced me, and he placed his hands on my head and said a prayer to God very attentively, and he entreated Him with great humility and devotion for my sake. When he brought his prayer and supplication to an end, then I took leave of him, and together I and Gabriel left him, and we proceeded until we arrived at the eighth heaven.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

I, Muhammad, and Gabriel found that the said eighth heaven consisted wholly of a topaz which was the most beautiful thing to see that mortal eyes might ever behold, and it was as thick as a five hundred years' journey. While we stood there, Gabriel knocked at the gate, and straightway an angel came to us who was made up entirely of such extraordinary brightness that it shone seventy thousand times more than that of the sun. This angel had seventy thousand heads, and each head, seventy thousand faces, and each face, seventy thousand eyes, and each eye, seventy thousand pupils, and each pupil trembled seventy thousand times a day from fear of Our Lord. The angel opened the gate for us, and we entered. When we were inside, we walked through this heaven until we arrived at a separator made up of curtains²⁶ which stood between God and the angels. There were also circles that formed another sort of partition, and around these circles were many angels called cherubim, and no one but God knew or could know how many of them there were.

²⁵ See note 10 above.

²⁶ Old French *cortines*, perhaps in the figurative sense, as with Latin *cor-tinæ*, of 'celestial vaults.' Cf. Koran 23.17

But I can indeed tell you this much about them: they were twice seventy thousand times larger than all the others whom I had seen, and they did nothing but praise God. When we reached them, Gabriel began to praise Our Lord with them, and so did I. After doing this, we entered into the said circles and curtains. Thereupon I looked attentively and saw that in the first separator were seventy curtains all of samite so red and bright that one could hardly look at it directly. Beyond these curtains were seventy other curtains of incomparably bright and shining green samite. Beyond these were seventy more. And so they continued, seventy curtains followed by seventy, consisting of all the colors that could be described, and they were fashioned in the manner of the first bright and shining ones. After passing through these curtains, we found another seventy separators made of pearls whiter than anything could be. And there were just as many separators composed of rubies, and then a like number consisting of emeralds. Such were the partitions, one after another, seventy followed by seventy, all of which consisted of every sort of precious gem that could be imagined or described. After these separators we came upon yet another seventy which all consisted of water, and there were just as many of snow, and an equal number of hail, and just as many of fog, and a like number made up of darkness, [the same number of fire], and just as many of light, and an equal number made up of God's glory, and then just as many consisting of every color imaginable. Between all these partitions were innumerable angels, and the angels all circled round and round incessantly while praising Our Lord. As I was observing these great marvels, Gabriel departed and left me quite alone.

CHAPTER TWENTY

When I, Muhammad, saw that I was alone, since Gabriel had left me, I took strength and courage in love of God, and I went forward. I walked until I passed through all the said separators, except that one alone consisting of God's glory. When I came near it, I heard a voice say to me: *Acrop codem ya habibi hya Muagmet*,²⁷ which means 'Approach me,

²⁷ *Uqrub quddâm, yâ habîbî, yâ Muhammad.*

friend Muhammad.' After hearing this, I went further, and I heard it tell me the same thing again. I advanced, and afterwards I heard it say to me a third time exactly the same thing, and moreover it told me: "Know, Muhammad, that I consider you the most honored of all the messengers and the highest of all the creatures and angels and men and demons which I made." Hearing the high praise that God spoke of me, at once I approached and went forward, so that between Him and me there was but the length of two crossbow shots. Then I greeted Our Lord God and He, me. Next He asked me how my people behaved there [on earth], and I told Him that they were very obedient. Thereupon Our Lord said to me: "Muhammad, I order you to have your people fast [sixty] days each year and offer up prayers fifty times every day." After He said this to me, I departed from Him and withdrew, and then I walked until I came upon Gabriel. While walking through this heaven looking at the Our Lord's abode, I saw His throne which was joined to the heaven in such a way that it seemed to me that heaven and throne had been created together. The throne was entirely of such great brightness that no one could describe it, and within the throne were all four elements—that is, fire and air and water and earth—and, moreover, this world and the next and paradise and hell. God had created all these things within the throne, which was the most resplendent object ever to be beheld. Along with the throne Our Lord God created a writing table as large as the distance that could be covered in a thousand years. This table was made of white pearl, and the edges were of ruby, and the middle of the table was of emerald, and the writing on it was entirely of light. Our Lord gazed upon this table one hundred times a day, and every time He looked there, He made and destroyed, created and slew: upon some He bestowed honors, and He took them away from others, some He raised, and others He humbled. And all that He wished, He judged and executed according to His will. Along with the aforesaid table, Our Lord God created a writing pen of light that was as long as the distance a man could cover in five hundred years, and it was of like breadth. After God created the pen, He ordered it to write. The pen said to Him: "What shall I write?" and He answered: "You will record My wisdom and everything that I created from the beginning of the world until its end." Forthwith the pen started to write, and it recorded all that God commanded it, and its writing was most deft and attractive, and it wrote very swiftly. This pen

was cut, and ink issued from its slit. And all these things were fashioned in such a manner that they seemed to have been created together.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

I have told you about the said throne, table, and pen. Now I shall tell you about the creation and appearance of the angels who hold up the throne. Know that the angels who bear the throne upon their shoulders came into being together with the throne, and the distance from their shoulders to their heads is the same as the throne's thickness. And the throne's thickness is so great that no one could measure it except Our Lord God alone Who made it. Each of these angels has four faces, one in front, another behind, the next facing right, and the last, left, and he also has four [kinds of] features: the first is a man's, the second an eagle's, the third a lion's, and the last a bull's. Their bodies are entirely covered with eyes, and each also has six wings: two for flying, another pair for praising Our Lord, and the third pair, consisting of fiery flames, covers their faces. They do not leave off praising Our Lord while saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy God Whose glory fills the heavens and earth, be praised and blessed without end, for You are the high and great and powerful God. Therefore You should be blessed and hallowed in all tongues, at all times, and in all places, wherever You are or will be."²⁸ The throne that these angels bear has four legs, of which each is seventy thousand times longer than the distance from heaven to earth. Within the throne are heaven and earth and the whole universe, and they seem as small there as would a grain of mustard in the palm of a large man. The angels who bear the throne do not know how great or short a distance they are from God. The separators between these angels and the others who hold up the [eighth] heaven are three in number. In the first partition are seventy curtains made up wholly of darkness; in the second are seventy others consisting of hail; and in the third, another seventy of pure light. Each of the aforesaid curtains is as thick as a five hundred years' journey, and there is this same distance between one curtain and the next. God made these separators. If they did not exist, the brightness

²⁸ See Apocalypse 4.6-8 and Ezekiel 1.5-11. In Christian iconography, the angels' four different sorts of features represent the four evangelists.

is so very intense there that it would burn all the angels who are present. And the angels who bear the throne are four. When Judgment Day comes, Our Lord will place there four more angels, and thus they will be eight. The angel with a man's features will entreat God on men's behalf to have mercy on them and pardon their sins; the next angel, who has an eagle's appearance, will pray for birds; the third, with a lion's features, will pray on behalf of savage beasts; and the last, who has a bull's features, will plead for domestic animals.²⁹

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

After I, Muhammad, and Gabriel had seen these things concerning the said throne, I looked and saw in the heaven where it stood seventy thousand corps of angels all ranked one after the other. The corps moved continuously around this heaven so that they met one another, and when they met, the angels sang so loudly and raised their voices so high in praising Our Lord that all the heavens heard them. Thereafter I saw another seventy thousand corps of angels, all of whom stood holding their hands joined behind their necks. When the other aforementioned angels raised their voices, these angels also lifted theirs saying: "Glory to You, great and mighty God, for there is no other god besides You. And You made all creatures, and they are submissive to You." After these corps I saw one hundred thousand other corps of angels, every one of whom stood holding his hands on his chest, the right hand over the left. All these angels were covered with hairs and feathers, and every hair and feather praised Our Lord in more ways than anyone could count, and no one way resembled another. These angels all had wings, and between each angel's wings was as much space as could be covered in three hundred years, and each of them measured this same distance from his ear down to his shoulder, and from one shoulder to the other, as much distance as could be covered in five hundred years, and from the ankle all the way up to the knee, the space one could travel in two hundred years. The knee alone was equal to a hundred years' journey; and from the top of the knee up to the hip, a three hundred years' journey;

²⁹ Earlier in this chapter, each of the first four angels had four faces with four different kinds of features. On the eight angels, see Koran 69.17.

and between one rib and the next, a journey of two hundred years; and from the palm up to the elbow, this same distance; and from the elbow up to the shoulder, a three hundred years' journey. The palms of their hands were so very large that if God were to grant them leave to do so, they could hold all the world's mountains in one palm and all the flat lands in the other palm without ever noticing it. I beheld yet another wonder: the angels who hold up the heaven where the said throne stands are as tall as the distance one could cover in two hundred seventeen thousand years, and each of their feet is as wide as the distance that could be covered in seven thousand. And each of them has so many faces and eyes that no one could relate it or conceive of their number except God Who created them. When these angels wish to hold the heaven up, they go to their knees, and others are present who admonish them to say: *Le halille zoham hille bille*,³⁰ which means 'There is no other god besides God, and He has power over all things.' As soon as they have said this, they stand up straight upon their feet, and they are so large that their feet pass through all the heavens and the earth right down to the wind underneath for as much distance as a man could cover in five hundred years. All these angels praise Our Lord in many ways, and they do not cease glorifying Him; and in their praise they say: *Le hilella helella*,³¹ which means 'There is no god other than the holy and good and great God Who has power over all things.' And after saying this, they pray to Our Lord for all creatures and, most greatly, on behalf of the men and women who believe sincerely in Him and keep His commandments.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

After I, Muhammad, and Gabriel had seen the aforesaid things, we descended to the seventh heaven where the angels called cherubim are.³²

³⁰ Cerulli, p. 231, n. 77, proposes *lâ ilâha illâ Allâhu, lâ hawla illâ bil-lâhi*, 'there is no god but God, there is no power besides God's,' which corresponds to the sense of the French translation but not to the transliteration.

³¹ This transliteration corresponds to the one given in note 21, but, obviously, it is incomplete.

³² Chapter 19 indicates that the cherubim are in the eighth heaven.

While we were there, I looked and saw that all these angels are so great in number that no one could count them except God Who made them. They all praise Our Lord, and in praising Him they raise their voices so loudly that if the people on earth were to hear but one of their voices, everyone would die from fear of the sound. All these angels are fashioned such that no one of them resembles another in features or speech or any of his limbs. While they are glorifying Our Lord, the praise of one angel does not resemble that of the others. They are so obedient to Our Lord God that since their creation, not one of them has ever turned his head to look at his companion; rather, they hold their heads constantly bent towards the ground on account of their fear of Him and because they are in all things very submissive and obedient to Him. I saw among these angels, who are very much larger than the others, seventy thousand ranks, one before the other, and their size is so great that their heads pass through the seventh heaven and their feet, below the abyss. Among the seventy thousand corps are yet another nine angelic ranks, one before the other, each of which is ninety times bigger than any of the others. The angels in these nine ranks have no space between their heads and shoulders, and they resemble one another in all respects so that there are no differences among them. And between one rank and the next is as much distance as could be covered in fifty thousand years.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Subsequent to the aforesaid matters, I, Muhammad, looked further and saw that the nine ranks of angels about which I told you are joined among themselves circuitously so that one penetrates the other in the manner of a mark weight which changers use for weighing.³³ And among these ranks runs a very large river of water, the beginning or end of which no one knows except Our Lord God Who made it. The water is so white and clear and shining that no one would dare look at it for fear of losing his sight. Beyond this river is another very large river consisting entirely of darkness denser and blacker than anything else that God ever made or created. And beyond this is another one made up

³³ A mark is eight ounces.

wholly of fire, and it burns incessantly [fueled] by its own substance; and the heat is more intense and greater than anyone could imagine. Beyond the aforesaid rivers are very large mountains which all consist only of snow, and they are so very white that one could hardly look at them directly. Behind these mountains is the great sea that crosses all the seven regions about which you will hear hereinafter. This sea is quite full of angels who remain standing there, and they are so large that the sea reaches no higher than their hips, and on the Day of Judgment, these angels will entreat God on behalf of fish in the sea and all other bodies of water. And although they are Our Lord's close friends, they do not know what things lie below the sea or where their feet are placed; but they hold their heads in the heaven where stands the throne about which I told you. And they are so obedient to Our Lord God that they praise Him without end, day and night, by saying: "Glory to You, God Who are surrounded by curtains of fog, water, darkness, fire, sea, and light."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

After observing the aforesaid things, I, Muhammad, took note and I saw that behind the great sea about which I told you is another very large sea consisting entirely of water so marvelously bright that its light surpasses all things on earth. In this sea are many angels who remain standing constantly and praise Our Lord incessantly by saying: *Le hille halalla*,³⁴ which means 'There is no other god [besides God].' They have uttered these words without interruption since the time they were created, and they will not cease saying them until Judgment Day. The angels are arranged so compactly in battle lines that they look just like the wall of a citadel or castle made by means of a plumb line. And I saw a very great wonder: the heaven where these angels stand is surrounded by four great rivers, of which one consists entirely of light so very bright that it surpasses every other sort of brightness except Our Lord's. The next consists of water whiter than milk or snow or any other thing. The water is so clear that one can see everything on the

³⁴ See the transliteration given in note 21.

river bottom just as well as if he were holding it in his hand; furthermore, it is so deep that no one could measure it; and the pebbles in the river consist entirely of precious gems of every kind imaginable. From this river issue all the other rivers of paradise. Beyond it is another which is made up entirely of snow so white that one cannot look at it for fear of losing his sight. And beyond the river of snow is another consisting wholly of water more clear and pure and tasty than could be described. This river is quite full of angels who all remain standing and come and go incessantly while praising Our Lord in various ways. And even though I saw and examined the angels and rivers and other afore-said things, I did not lose my sight so that I was kept from seeing at all times the heaven where stands Our Lord's throne about which I told you. I observed yet another wonder: I saw that in the heaven where the throne stands are twice seventy thousand times more tongues than in all the creatures existing in every heaven and land. And these tongues all praise Our Lord God incessantly, day and night, and each of them praises Him in every language and blesses His most holy name and His power.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

After I, Muhammad, saw the said things about which you heard above, I learned and became aware that Our Lord God had made eighteen thousand worlds, one of which is this world where we are. Furthermore, He created a thousand kinds of creatures, not counting men and demons and jinn and Gog and Magog,³⁵ which are between men and demons. And no one can know how many of these creatures there are except God alone Who made and created them. Of the thousand sorts of species, four hundred are on the land and six hundred, in the sea. In addition to all this, the heavens are all so full of angels that I, Muhammad, swear by God Who put the soul in my body that they are so close-packed and tightly joined as to make it impossible to place even a single hair between them. Certain of these angels remain standing, others are seated, and still others are prostrate. They all entreat and praise Our Lord

³⁵ See Apocalypse 20.7 and Koran 18.93-101 and 21.96. Gog and Magog are mythical peoples shut in an enclosure with impenetrable walls.

and tremble and beat their wings for fear of Him, and they do not disobey Him in anything for so much as the space of a single blink of the eye.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

After I, Muhammad, departed from these angels about whom I told you, Gabriel led me to a region that Our Lord God had made especially for His use. It was wholly white, and its whiteness consisted entirely of pure light, and it was quite full of creatures which God had made. There were more kinds of creatures than could be related or counted, and all were so submissive to Our Lord that they did not disobey Him for so much as the time it would take to open and close one's mouth. Besides all this, they praised Him constantly in every way that they knew and could. Were people to ask me if these creatures were the children of Adam, I would answer them that they did not know if God created Adam or not; and should they wish to ask me further if they were of the devil's lineage, I would tell them that they did not know, either, whether or not God created the devil. And if they wished to question me still further and were to say to me: "Tell us, Messenger of God, since these creatures are neither men nor demons, what creatures are they then?" I would answer them and speak thus: "You know nothing of these creatures, nor shall I tell you it, for Our Lord has forbidden me to do so, nor would I dare act contrary to His interdiction." And after seeing these things, I departed from there and withdrew.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

After I, Muhammad, saw the white region and the aforesaid creatures, the spirit of God³⁶ led me through all the heavens and had me see again

³⁶ Old French *li esprit de Diex*. The most recent editors of the Latin version note that *spiritus Domini* here refers to Jesus Christ, and they cite the Koran 3.44 and 21.91—*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 129, n. 27, and p. 177, n. 61. In chapter 12 above, Jesus, who resides in the first heaven, is called *espirit de Diex*. It is evident, however, that in chapter 85 *li esprit de Diex* (Latin: *spiritus Dei*) which descended upon Muhammad when he first began

in an instant everything I had observed at leisure earlier. And it led me until I came upon Gabriel in the company of the angel Raphael, who had descended at Our Lord's command in order to lead me to the seven regions surrounding the said white region and show me the things that were there. While I was descending, I came upon an angel named Auquotrofins,³⁷ and he was wondrously large. He held in his hand a pen consisting entirely of light, and it was as long as the distance that could be covered in five hundred years. This pen was cut, and from the slit issued ink composed wholly of light. The pen knew seventy thousand languages that no one understood except the angel Auquotrofins, and this same Auquotrofins knew just as many of them that no one understood but the pen. Blessed be God Who made and created things as He pleased!

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

After I, Muhammad, saw the aforesaid things, Gabriel and Raphael showed me a rooster which was near Our Lord. This rooster was so large that it held its head and comb in the heaven where Our Lord and His throne are and its feet, at the very bottom of the seventh region about which you will hear later.³⁸ What might I tell you about its form? God made it as He pleased. And the rooster was one of Our Lord's angels. But notwithstanding all this, it did not know where God was, yet it still glorified Our Lord incessantly and said in its praise: "Glory to You, Lord God, wherever You may be." This rooster had wings so large that when [it opened them], they passed through all the heavens and lands from the east all the way to the west. And when midnight comes, it opens and beats its wings and says: *Le halla hilalla*,³⁹ which means 'There is no other god besides God.' After it sings this,

to prophesy is not Jesus. It is clear, also, that the spirit of God mentioned in chapter 28 is not Gabriel, identified as the bearer of divine revelations to Muhammad in the Koran 2.97. See references to several different spirits of God in the Koran 2.87, 4.171, 15.29, 16.2, 16.102, 17.85, 26.193, 32.9, 40.15, 42.52, 70.4, 78.38, and 97.4.

³⁷ Or Anquotrofins. Latin version: Ankocrofin. Unidentified name.

³⁸ Chapter 69 says that the rooster's feet are in Kaf, the lowest region.

³⁹ See the transliteration in note 21.

immediately all the roosters on earth beat their wings and praise God; and when it is silent, all of them are still. When daybreak comes, the said rooster does the same as at midnight, and it says moreover in its crowing: "Glory to You, great and mighty God Who are Lord of all the heavens and lands." After it says this, all the roosters do likewise, and they behave thus every time that it crows. Afterwards I examined the rooster's appearance and saw that it had on its upper parts thick feathers all so marvelously white that their whiteness was indescribable; and the small feathers below were so very green that no one could describe or imagine their greenness. Indeed, I took such very great pleasure and joy in looking at it that I could never have my fill of doing so. When I forsook looking at the rooster, I came upon and saw an angel who was before Our Lord, and he was most marvelously formed, for half of his body consisted of snow and the other [half], of glowing fire, and this occurred in such a way that the snow did not extinguish the fire, nor did the fire destroy the snow. This angel remained standing before Our Lord and said: "Blessed be the high and powerful God Who keeps the heat of the fire from melting the snow and the cold of the snow from extinguishing the fire." Subsequently he said: "Lord God, just as You united the snow and fire, I pray that You see fit to unite the hearts of Your servants who obey You so that they may serve You better." Further, I saw surrounding this angel so many other angels all praising Our Lord aloud that no one could tell or conceive of their number. All these angels held their heads erect, and they looked with their eyes fixed in a straight line before them so that they glanced neither up nor down on account of the fear they had of Our Lord God.

CHAPTER THIRTY

After I, Muhammad, saw these things about which I told you, I and Gabriel walked together until we arrived at the great wall of paradise. Subsequently I looked and saw that the large, squared blocks in this wall were arranged among themselves so that some were of gold, [others of silver], and still others of ruby which were placed between the gold and silver ones. The wall threw off such great brightness that one could hardly look at it directly. I saw, also, that the cement with which

the blocks were joined consisted wholly of musk and ambergris mixed with rose water, and it smelled more fragrant than anyone could relate. I looked to see if the wall's height could be determined, and I recognized clearly that this was unavailing, for there is no one alive who could indicate or imagine its height except Our Lord God alone Who made it. And I asked Gabriel and said to him: "What is this that I see?" He answered me by saying: "Know, Messenger of God, that these are the wall and towers of paradise. I swear by the name of God that never has any angel or demon or jinn climbed on top of this wall or these towers, for they are kept from the sight of all creatures. And the first man ever to see them up to now is you, Muhammad. And I tell you further that beyond this paradise is a garden called *Gennet alcode* [*Jannat al-khuld*] in Arabic, which means 'lasting paradise.' And know that whereas people say there is only one paradise, it is true inasmuch as paradise is nothing other than delight; but Our Lord God has divided this delight into several sorts, and He distributes it to His friends according to what they deserve. Our Lord wishes for you to see and know how the sorts of delight are divided and distributed and what He has chosen for you and your people. Our Lord made with His Own hand for your use the garden about which I spoke to you called 'lasting paradise,' and between this paradise and Our Lord are only two curtains. Thus it is the most noble paradise and more highly prized than all the others. So come forward: I shall show it to you." When he told me this, I bowed to him and accompanied him until we arrived at the gate. [And when we were there, Gabriel called at the gate], and forthwith porters came and asked who it was. Then Gabriel gave his name, and the porters said to him: "Who is that accompanying you?" Gabriel told them: "He is Muhammad, the Messenger of God." Thereafter they said: "Has he already been sent?" And Gabriel answered them: "Yes." Immediately the gates were opened for us, and we entered.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

When I, Muhammad, and Gabriel entered into the aforesaid garden,⁴⁰ I

⁴⁰ The end of chapter 30 seems to indicate that the first garden which Muhammad and Gabriel enter here is *Gennet alcode*; but the beginning of

looked and saw that it was the most beautiful thing imaginable, and I asked Gabriel how long and wide the garden was. He answered me thus: "Know, Muhammad, that when Our Lord God created the garden, He made it as wide as heaven and earth; but no one knows its length except Our Lord Who created it." Subsequently I asked him and said: "Do tell me, Gabriel, what will become of this garden when heaven and earth are transformed?" He answered me by saying: "Know, Messenger of God, that when Our Lord transforms heaven and earth on Judgment Day, the place where the garden is now will be turned into air, and then Our Lord God will draw out both this garden and another, which is the garden where Adam was created, and its name is *Hedem* ['*Adn*]. And the two gardens will draw after them all the other gardens. The region that God makes from these gardens will be equal in length to heaven and earth. After they are drawn there, between the gardens and the throne of Our Lord will be only the glory of God and His brightness, the nature of which no one knows except Himself. All the angels will remain in this brightness, and they will be as numerous there as they are now in all the heavens. From that day forth this brightness will spread everywhere, and it will be so very great that it will have neither measure nor end, just as there is none to God's power. Blessed be He Who is high and powerful over all things!" After Gabriel related this to me, I asked him to tell me how the aforesaid garden named *Hedem* had been created and how long and wide it was. He answered me by saying: "Know, Muhammad, that when Our Lord God made this garden, He created it with a great abundance of everything there is. Then He created within it another one named *Genen*⁴¹ which is between heaven and earth beyond the place where the sun rises. After God made this garden, He raised it to a height equal to the distance one could travel in six hundred sixty-three years."

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

After I heard what Gabriel related to me about the aforesaid matters, I

chapter 33 states that they first visited *Hedem*, where Adam was created.

⁴¹ *Jinân*, plural of *janna* = 'garden' or 'paradise'—*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 185, n. 65.

asked him if I might know how much distance there is from the earth all the way to the first heaven. Gabriel answered me and said: "Know, Muhammad, that from the first heaven down to earth is as much space as one could cover in six hundred sixty-three years, and without a doubt, there is this much, just as Our Lord God declares in the Koran when He says: 'We shall divide and apportion the distance from earth up to the first heaven and all the way to the heaven where Our throne stands.'"⁴² Next I asked him the distance from the heaven where Our Lord's throne is down to earth. He answered me that from the heaven where the throne stands down to earth is as much space as one could cover in fifty thousand years—with respect to our years, months, and days. And I asked him then, too, if one finds either daylight or night there. He answered me that there is neither day nor night nor sun nor moon nor stars, but the light there is so very great that the sun's light compared with this brightness is similar to the brightness of a single star compared to that of the sun. After he told me this, I pondered in my heart and recognized indeed that each of the heavens which I had seen is as thick as the distance a man could be travel in one thousand years, and there is this same distance between one heaven and the next.⁴³ Thus I realized that together all the aforesaid heavens and curtains and separators comprise, in short, as much distance throughout as could be covered in forty-two thousand years.⁴⁴

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

I, Muhammad, Messenger of God, make known to all those who believe firmly in Our Lord and desire to possess the joy of paradise that the nature of this garden which Gabriel showed me first, where Adam

⁴² The sense of this quotation is unclear. Cerulli, p. 233, n. 101, suggests that it may refer to the Koran 32.5: "He orders the Affair from the heaven to the earth; then it will ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years as you count."

⁴³ Earlier chapters indicated distances equal to a five hundred years' journey.

⁴⁴ The distances specified in this chapter are the same in the Old French and Latin versions. The inconsistency of the numbers among themselves may be attributed to misreading on the Latin translator's part or to the Spanish rendering or the Arabic original.

was created, is as follows: towards the eastern portion, from which the sun rises, it is quite filled with trees that always cast shade everywhere as the sun turns. Thereafter I saw, too, in the garden's region a very large river from which spring all the other rivers that flow through the world, and this great river flows through the land of Egypt and is named the Nile, and in Latin it is called Phison. While it flows through the garden's ground, it consists wholly of honey, and after it leaves this area, it turns into water at once. Behind the river I saw another very large one named Adehilla, and it is called Euphrates in Latin. As long as it flows through the garden's ground, it consists solely of the whitest milk that one could describe, and as soon as it leaves there, it turns into water. And behind this, I saw another very large one named Gayan, which is Gehon in Latin. While it flows through the garden's ground, it consists entirely of wine, and when it leaves there, it turns into water. And beyond this, I saw yet another very large one named Targa, which is Tigris in Latin; and it consists wholly of the clearest, most tasty water that could be imagined.⁴⁵ These four rivers are separated so that the one consisting of honey flows towards the east, the one of milk towards the west, the one of wine towards the south, and the one of water towards the north. After observing these four rivers, I looked and saw inscribed above the inner side of the garden's gate: "I am God, and there is no god besides Myself. And all men who say *Le halla hilalla Muagmet raçur halla*"⁴⁶—which means 'There is no god other than God, and Muhammad is His Messenger'—"will henceforth not go into hell or suffer any punishment on account of sins that they may have."

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

After I, Muhammad, saw the aforesaid things, I walked through all the gardens. And as I walked gazing here and there, I saw that the gardens

⁴⁵ The Latin and French translators or their sources were uncertain of some of the corresponding Arabic and Latin names for the four rivers of the earthly paradise mentioned in Genesis 2.11-14. For Phison, the French translator gives Gycon Fison, which seems to be a combination of Gehon and Phison. Adehilla is Arabic ad-Dijla, the Tigris. Gayan is Jaihân, Gehon. Targa is an unknown name.

⁴⁶ *Lâ ilâha illâ 'llâh. Muhammad rasûl Allâh.*

were fashioned in different ways and that one of them was better than the others, and God did this in order to bestow more favor and honor upon those whom He loves more. And I learned the names of these gardens, and I shall tell you what each of them is called. Know that the first about which I told you, where Adam was created, is called *Hedem*; the second, *Dar algelel* [*Dâr al-jalâl*]; the third, *Dar alzelem* [*Dâr al-salâm*]; the fourth, *Gennet halmaulz* [*Jannat al-ma'wâ*]; the fifth, *Gennet halkode* [*Jannat al-khuld*]; the sixth, *Gennet halfardauz* [*Jannat al-firdaws*]; and the seventh, *Gennet hanaym* [*Jannat an-na'îm*].⁴⁷ And this seventh paradise is, as it were, the castle of the gardens, for it is the highest, and from it one can see all the others. Our Lord goes to it when He wishes to see the gardens, and it is His Own dwelling when He goes there. I also saw in this paradise two great pillars, one of emerald and the other of ruby, and no one knows their height and width except God. But I can indeed tell you this much about them: from one pillar to the other equals the distance from the east all the way to the west, and everything between these pillars is entirely of light. The two pillars stand at the entrance to the gate of the said garden of Our Lord. The other gardens are made up wholly of light, and there are many cities and castles entirely of light, and the palaces, houses, halls, rooms, and all other places within these castles and cities also consist of light. Further, there are more trees and more different sorts of them and different varieties of fruits that they produce than could be told, and they are more beautiful than rubies or emeralds or any precious gems, and they are more fragrant than anything one could imagine. Through these gardens flow rivers of so many variously colored wines that no one could describe or conceive of it, and they all smell wondrously good. Besides all this, there are such a great number of tents of so many different sorts on the river banks and houses, too, so beautiful and excellent and of such wondrous appearance that the mortal mind could not imagine it, and they all consist of pure light.

⁴⁷ The names of the second through the seventh gardens mean 'Dwelling of Glory,' 'Dwelling of Peace,' 'Paradise of Refuge,' 'Paradise of Eternity,' 'Garden of Paradise,' and 'Garden of Delight.'

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

After I, Muhammad, observed everything about which I told you and you heard above, I examined further and saw within the tents and houses standing on the banks of the said rivers [very beautiful and elegant ladies all consisting of the purest light. Therein are, doubtless,] the most lovely and elegant ladies of whom the human mind could conceive, and they have the most beautiful eyes and loving gaze. Pearls and precious stones envelop all of these ladies' heads, and, moreover, their headdresses all are made up wholly of light, too. [Indeed, each of their garments consists of light,] and their girdles of ambergris and musk with pearls and precious gems are so very fragrant that a man who is quite ill would indeed be cured through their scent. They are seated all in a row, and they seem to be the most beautiful thing in the world. They raise their voices on high and sing so well and clearly and sweetly that every other voice or instrument one might name is of no account compared with their song. They say while singing: "We are everlasting virgins who cannot die and maidens free of all vice, and, likewise, we are wholly free of anger and evil thoughts. We are gay and very lovely, for our beauty is everlasting. We are assigned to honored men who are Our Lord God's servants and who obey Him. Ah, how fortunate will be those who are bestowed on us and on whom we are bestowed!" During their singing, I took note and heard them say in their song words that God speaks [in] the Koran when He says: "We created loving virgins who have a wondrous love for their mates."⁴⁸ I took note of their appearance besides and observed that while they sing, one can see their teeth, which are whiter than pearl or any snow whatever; and their mouths are so beautiful and red that no ruby could compare to them. These ladies are also very enamored of those whom they are destined to have as mates, but not of any other; yet they do not know who they will be nor their names, just as Our Lord says in the Koran: "I have made them so modest that they raise their eyes only to their husbands; nor would any of the men—not the devil himself, either—be so bold as to approach any of the women other than his own wife."⁴⁹ And every time the husbands lie with them, they find them to be virgins, just as

⁴⁸ Koran 56.35-38.

⁴⁹ Koran 55.56.

they were before. Each of these ladies has inscribed on her breast the name of her lover, and he, too, [has] her name [written on his]. The husband's inscription reads: "I am your beloved, and I shall not exchange you for any other." The wife's inscription regarding her husband is the same. I saw, furthermore, that these men's and ladies' hearts, livers, and bone marrow, too, are visible from the outside, just as a white thread would be in a crystal vial. For this reason one partner can neither do nor conceive of anything in his heart without the other seeing it. And each of the ladies wears seventy thousand dalmatics, one upon the other, fashioned in the manner of the wide-sleeved surplices that clerics wear when they enter church in order to sing.⁵⁰ All these dalmatics are of pure gold embroidered most wondrously in divers colors, and they wear them as lightly as a very fine-spun chemise.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

I, Muhammad, wish all who hear this book to know how the gardens about which I told you are fashioned and what each one is like. First I shall tell you about *Gennet hanaym*, which is God's Own dwelling in paradise, and it is higher than all the others, as you heard above. *Gennet hanaym* means 'garden quite filled with all the delights of which the human mind can conceive.' The walls of this garden are made up entirely of rubies, and so, too, are the towers and houses within. But the beds and pallets, the stairs for ascending to the upper floors, and all the utensils and doors of the said houses are of pearl. Inside are loving maidens who are one hundred thousand times more beautiful and cheerful than the others about whom I told you. There are tents, too, some made of rubies, others of emeralds, and yet others of pearls and, thus, every manner of the most beautiful and marvelously worked precious gems that the human mind could imagine. These tents are set beside fountains of water and wines that spring up there and comprise all conceivable colors and tastes. And there are the sweet and wondrous songs

⁵⁰ This may be a gloss attributable to the Spanish translator. However, *hulla*, an Arabic word for 'cloak' (see the note to chapter 37 below), is used to name Christian clerics' surplices and bridal attire—*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 199, n. 75.

of the maidens seated under the trees, all consisting of every sort of precious stone, and the fruits that they produce, too, which surpass all things in sweetness and savor. There are the sounds of instruments more sweet and delightful to hear than the human mind could fancy. Inside this garden are two others: one of them and everything it contains are entirely surrounded within and without by precious gems, and the other is of pure vermillioned gold, which is a most beautiful thing to behold. And the garden about which I told you named [*Gennet*] *hanaym* is constructed wholly of steps, one hundred in number, and the steps are fashioned in the following manner: each of them is as high as the distance one could travel in two hundred fifty years, and it is just as wide. The first of the steps is gold, and the next, silver, and the following one, ruby, the next, emerald, the one after that, pearl, and such are all one hundred. The cement with which these steps are joined is composed wholly of ambergris and musk, which smell marvelously fragrant. This is the place that God has prepared for those who believe in Him firmly, and on Judgment Day He will say to them: "Advance, dear friends, and cross mightily *Azirat halmuçakin* [*as-Sirât al-mustaqîm*]"⁵¹—and *Azirat* is a bridge about which you will hear later—"and take this garden and divide it among yourselves according to what each of you deserves, for I made the garden and the houses, trees, and other things within it for you and your use, and they are quite full of My grace and glory, which are everlasting, without end."

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Moreover, I, Muhammad, son of Abdille ['Abdallâh], Messenger of God, say the following: he who inhabits the lowest level of the said paradise of Our Lord has for his use as much space all around him as one could travel in five hundred years, and Our Lord God gives him five hundred women as wives and four thousand virgins whom he will take as wives when he pleases and eight thousand others who are not virgins to serve him in everything. And when he desires to embrace the one whom he loves the most, she will go to him entirely on her own to

⁵¹ 'The straight path.'

accomplish this. Their embrace will be such that as long as he loves her, she will not be able to separate herself from him, nor he from her, either. They will have set before them a table that never lacks in anything they desire to eat or drink, for as soon as they place their hands upon the table, they will be as satisfied as if they had eaten all the victuals in the world, and they will have their fill of drink as if they had [just] taken the cup away from their mouths. Afterwards, an angel will go to them each day and supply them with a hundred *alfuilles*,⁵² which are, as it were, garments of gold cloth, and he will say to them: "Our Lord God sends you this present. Do you like it?" Then they [will] respond by saying: "We find it more pleasing than anything we have ever seen." And if it happens that they desire to go to the paradise called *Gennet halkode*, about which you heard earlier, in order to see the trees there and taste their fruit, immediately an angel will go to them and will lead them thither, and he will say to the first tree that he finds: "Give me some of your food for Our Lord's servants." Straightway the tree will give him seventy thousand bowls of thoroughly prepared meat consisting of more sorts of flesh and fowl than the human mind could imagine. And know that this fowl has no feathers or quills or bones at all, and it is neither boiled in water nor roasted in fire. It is as tasty to eat as butter and honey combined, and it smells of musk and ambergris. They will eat as much of this food as they wish twice a day, at lunch and supper, and the last morsel of it will be as flavorful as the first. Besides all this, Our Lord God will send them many other presents from heaven through His angels.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Let those who see this book know that after God's servants, about whom I told you earlier, finish eating, the food inside their stomachs will become vapor, as it were, and will turn into perspiration on the

⁵² Unknown word in Old French. The Latin version gives *alfollia*, which is unattested elsewhere (see, however, *folia*, 'gold leaf,' in DuCange, *Glossarium*, vol. 3, p. 539.) Cerulli, p. 235, n. 129, speculates that the source of these terms is Old Spanish *alfolla* or *alholla*, from Arabic *al-hulla*, 'cloak, dalmatic.'

outside, and this perspiration will smell as fragrant as musk. And straightway angels will open a postern leading into another most wondrous garden. At the entrance in front of this garden is a tree much taller than anyone could reckon, and at the foot of the tree spring up two fountains, the most beautiful and clearest the mortal mind could imagine. Those who enter paradise go to one of these fountains and drink, and as soon as they drink, they are cleansed of all that they have eaten so that nothing remains of it. Subsequently they go to the other fountain and bathe, and after bathing, they say their prayers, and the grace of Our Lord descends upon them. Then they return to paradise, and when they arrive at the gate, the porter interrogates them and says: "Are you cleansed?" They reply: "Yes," and immediately he opens the gate for them, and they enter. When they are inside, they find there the most beautiful children⁵³ anyone could describe, for they are similar to a very white pearl in whiteness, and in redness, to a brightly colored red rose. These children go through the garden enjoying themselves, just as children on earth do. They know all those who enter paradise by their features and names, and one of the children goes to someone among those entering paradise and says to him: "Welcome, dear friend, I bring you good tidings." So it happens that one or other of these children says to each of them: "Know that Our Lord God has prepared for you many of the fairest virgins to be found anywhere and a great number of servants and many of the most beautiful houses that could be described." When he hears what the child relates to him, he replies without delay by saying: "God be praised, and bless you who bear me these tidings." Right away the child leaves him and goes to the lady among the others whom he knows the comer loves most, and he relates to her news of the one who is to be her husband. She answers him by saying: "Have you seen him?" And he replies: "Yes." Forthwith the lady says: "Praised be God for it, and bless you who have brought me these tidings." The lady's joy is almost greater than she can believe, and she goes straightway to the gate to see if this is true or not. When the comer approaches and sees the walls of his house, which are composed entirely of pearls and precious gems, and he looks upwards, he is nearly blinded by the great

⁵³ Old French *enfanç* corresponds to the Latin version's *pueri / pueros*, 'children' or, here, 'pages.' See Koran 52.24.

brightness there—and know that many would already have been blinded were it not that Our Lord God does not permit it, for this brightness is much more intense than lightning when there is very loud thunder—and after looking upwards, he lowers his head and sees the virgins whom he is to have as wives and the hangings and drapery spread through the main hall and the chairs, beds, and pallets all [made up] of pearls, rubies, and emeralds [and] upholstered, [too], with samite and silk fabrics of various colors. After seeing these things, he will say at once: “Blessed be God Who brought us here, for we would not possess this were it not for His great mercy and the truth that Muhammad, His Messenger, showed and revealed to us in telling us that we would inherit paradise.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

I, Muhammad, wish for people to know furthermore that in paradise is a tree called *thube* [*tûbâ*] in Arabic, which means ‘tree of joy and delight.’⁵⁴ The trunk of this tree is so thick that a man on the best and fastest horse in the world could not circle it in one hundred years, even if he were to do nothing but ride. The foot of this tree is wholly of ruby, and the ground where it is planted consists entirely of musk and ambergris whiter than any snow, and it is indescribably fragrant; but since the fragrance of the musk and ambergris is very strong, camphor has been mixed there in order to moderate it. This tree’s branches are wholly of emerald, and the leaves, of samite, and the flowers, of the most beautiful gold cloth one could describe. The fruits are like pearls so very large that if one of these fruits were here on earth, a hundred men would have enough to eat from it for a year. The fruits are whiter than any snow and more transparent than crystal or any other substance, and their flavor is just like ginger [and] honey combined. The surrounding grass, similar to meadow grass, consists entirely of green saffron that is wondrously fragrant, and it is so fresh that it always seems to

⁵⁴ *Tûbâ* in the Koran 13.29 is an infinitive noun meaning ‘a good final state’ or ‘good future.’ For an explanation of how *tûbâ* became associated with a heavenly tree in popular exegesis, see *Le livre de l’échelle*, pp. 50-51.

have just come up. At the foot of this tree spring forth many fountains all of wine whence the rivers flow through the gardens, and some of the wines are whiter and more transparent than the clearest water, and others are redder and clearer than any ruby. These two sorts are finer and more flavorful than could be told. There are two other sorts of wine, one of which is similar to greenish⁵⁵ wine in color and taste, and the other resembles a topaz-like yellow and clear wine, and it is more mellow and stronger to drink than could be recounted. These are the four principal fountains, but among them are so many others all consisting of wines of such diverse colors and flavors that no one could conceive of it.

CHAPTER FORTY

After I, Muhammad, saw the aforesaid tree called *thube*, I beheld another that is among the foremost and most beautiful trees in paradise. All those in paradise sit and gather beneath this tree to hear tales and stories told to them by an angel who is there and who performs no service other than this. While looking at the angel-storyteller, I took note and saw arrive a very large company of angels all riding camels. The camels were all linked by golden chains about their necks, and their faces resembled burning candles, and their coats were just like intermingled red and white silk, which seemed the most beautiful thing I had beheld in a long time. They all were gentle by nature and well-trained so that they had no need of correction, nor did any work that they had to do trouble them in the least. The camels were loaded with gold, silver, pearls, and all sorts of other precious gems. When the angels riding the camels arrived at the place where they found those who were listening to the tales and stories about which I told you, they unloaded all the jewels and gave them on behalf of Our Lord to those present and greeted them, too; and then they said to them: "Mount these camels and go to Our Lord because He wishes to see you, and you to see Him, and He wants to speak to you, and you to speak to Him. And He will show you more kindness and honor than He has shown you up to now." Without delay each began to ride his camel, and they all went together

⁵⁵ *Verdet*, 'tart.' Cf. modern French *vin verdelet*.

closed up side by side in ranks in such a way that the camels proceeded so evenly that none of them passed a head or knee before another. When they came upon any of paradise's trees, at once the tree lay down on the ground spontaneously and spread itself out, so that it was just as if there were nothing to present an obstacle to their progress or cause any one of them to advance beyond another and break their ranks. And in this manner they arrived in the presence of Our Lord in paradise.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

After the servants of Our Lord had gone before Him in paradise, as you heard above, He revealed His very beautiful face, great and honored above all things, and He showed Himself to them. Immediately they bowed to Him, greeted Him, and spoke to Him thus: "You are peace, and it originates in You, and honor and magnificence are rightfully ascribed to You." Our Lord answered them: "My peace and mercy and salvation be with you, for doubtless peace is Mine, and it comes from Me, and everlasting honor and magnificence rightfully reside in Me. And may My servants and friends who observed My law and commandments and feared Me before having seen Me be welcome." They responded to this by saying: "We swear by Your glory and great nobility and majesty that we are unable to serve You in a manner equal to Your great compassion and power. But we pray only that You allow us to throw ourselves prostrate before You and worship You and praise Your most holy name." Our Lord answered them: "That you will not do, for I have relieved you of all hardship and the trouble of praying and every other burdensome thing, and I have given rest to your souls, for the time has come to grant what I promised you. Therefore, request and choose what you desire, and it will all be given to you, and I shall not bestow it upon you according to what you deserve, but in conformity with My generosity and majesty and mercy. Therefore, make your request boldly." After He said this, they answered Him without delay by saying: "Lord, many other men had much pleasure and delight from their flesh and what they wished in their lifetime. And we forsook all for You. Therefore, we pray You to give us in recompense for this as many good things as existed in the whole world from its beginning up

to its end." Thereupon Our Lord answered them and said: "You have asked for little and much less than your due and what you have merited. And I give you everything that you requested, and besides that, I grant you also what you will see." And then they looked and saw many castles, of which all the walls, towers, houses, halls, chambers, and every other place within were of gold, silver, rubies, emeralds, and all kinds of precious gems and pearls, too, of every hue imaginable. The halls were all tapestried with gold cloth and silk of every color in this manner: the green cloth was greener and brighter than any emerald, and the red one [was redder] and brighter than any ruby, and so on for each of the other fabrics according to its color. And the splendor of the aforesaid things was so very great and intense that if God had not prevented it, no one might look at them without losing his sight, for each object by itself was brighter and more resplendent than the sun.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

After I, Muhammad, observed the aforementioned things, I looked further and saw that each of the children about whom I told you, those who went strolling through the garden, was leading four most marvelously beautiful palfreys, and upon each four palfreys was a litter more lovely and richer than the mortal mind could imagine. Atop each litter was a small castle of light and precious stones worked more wondrously than could be conceived. Within each of these small castles was a vault of rubies, emeralds, and pearls, and within the vault was an altar, and an angel sat upon the altar, and around him were many other angels who were very intimate with Our Lord. These angels tarried in order to await and meet those who were coming into paradise and greet them with great honor. When those arriving in paradise were near the litters, the angels greeted them and ordered them on behalf of Our Lord to enter therein, and they went inside without delay. The children about whom you heard led them to the delightful gardens of paradise. When they arrived there, they found *alkazeres* [*al-qusûr*], which is Arabic for 'royal mansions.' They had them alight there, and the angels got down with them and led them inside the mansions. They took them by the hands, and they sat down and began to speak among themselves and

banter and laugh so pleasingly and loudly that their laughter was heard from very far away. And after they had done this for a long while, the angels said to them: "Friends, we swear to you by the majesty and honor of Our Lord that since the time we were created, we have never played or laughed, nor have our mouths opened or our tongues moved up to this moment in order to do anything other than praise Our Lord. But just now we laughed and dallied with you, and we did so for love of you and for your honor." After saying this, they told them: "May God grant that you delight in the good He has conferred on you." Thereupon they took their leave and departed from them. After the angels had left them, they remained, each in his own mansion, and they found one hundred thousand times more good than they had longed for earlier or requested of Our Lord.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

While gazing at the mansions and other aforesaid things, I, Muhammad, looked and saw that each of the houses had a postern leading to one of the rivers of paradise, and I say 'one' because there are many of various sorts, but those about which I am telling you are very beautiful and clear and most wondrously large. On both sides of these rivers are paradise's mountains all consisting of the most beautiful sapphire to be found anywhere. Within the mountains originate veins of gold, silver, and every manner of precious gem possible, and they go by way of their channels to the said river, so that all the river's gravel is composed solely of precious stones. The sapphire of which the said mountains consist is so very clear that on the side adjoining the river, everything there is within can be seen from the outside. Moreover, the mountains have many other courses leading to the gardens on the other, far side, and each of these courses leads into four gardens of paradise. Two of the four gardens are most spacious, and in each of them gush two very large and lovely fountains, and in these gardens are many trees, of which each produces fruits of a hundred dissimilar varieties without their having been grafted. The other two gardens are not as spacious, and in each of them springs up a fountain not as large as the others just mentioned, but it is most [lovely] and exceedingly limpid.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

After seeing the aforesaid rivers, mountains, gardens, and fountains there, I, Muhammad, looked further and saw in the gardens palms and pomegranate trees bigger and more beautiful than could be told. When placed in the mouth, the fruits from these trees have the flavors of all the other fruits that taste [delicious] in this world. When those in paradise enter the gardens, they find there under the said trees the most beautiful and rich tents that the human mind could imagine. Within these tents tarry virgins called *halkories*⁵⁶ in Arabic, which means 'women chosen and watched over by God,' for they are so well guarded that no man or the devil, either, dares touch them except those alone upon whom they are bestowed. What shall I tell you about their beauty? No one could describe it or conceive of it in his heart. The aforementioned maidens sit upon the most beautiful fabrics to be found anywhere, and when those men to whom they are granted arrive there, they rise in their honor and receive them most joyously and then sit down again with them. When they are seated thus, Our Lord God goes to see them with a very large company of angels and says to them: "Have you found what I promised you?" They reply by saying: "Yes, Lord, great thanks to You." Thereafter Our Lord says to them in turn: "How do the rewards that I give those who serve Me seem to you? Are you well satisfied with what I have done for you?" They answer: "If You are content with us, we are very well satisfied with what You have done for us." Our Lord now says to them: "I am very satisfied with you, since you have entered My mansion, and I spoke to you and revealed My face to you, and you embraced My angels. And know truly and do not doubt that the gifts I have granted you will never be taken away from you or contested." Together they reply: "Glory to You, Our Lord God, and we thank You Who have given us everlasting joy which is without pain or toil."

⁵⁶ A form of *al-hûr*, plural (*haurâ*, sing.), the houris or 'women with intensely white and black eyes.'

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

When I, Muhammad, Messenger of God, saw the aforementioned things, I marveled greatly, and I was exceedingly joyful in my heart because of them, and I blessed Our Lord God on account of the great good that He did for those who served Him. Subsequently I looked at those who served [in paradise and saw that they were] so very handsome that it could not be related. I saw more besides, for an angel was seated on a throne of light, and no one could describe his great size and beauty. He was surrounded by angels who all remained standing and served him. I asked Gabriel who this large angel was, and he answered me by saying that he was the guardian of paradise and his name was Ridohan [Ridwân]. When I heard this, I immediately went towards him and greeted him. And he asked Gabriel who I was, and Gabriel told him my name and business. Straightway he greeted me and received me most cheerfully and with great joy, and he asked me what I sought. I told him that I wished to see all the gardens. Without delay he took me by the hand and led me through them all and showed me the rivers, trees, castles, royal mansions and their upper floors, and everything that was there. All these things shone so brightly with pure light that I nearly lost my sight because of the brilliance. Ridohan continued showing me everything that God had prepared as gifts for His friends, and he pointed out more to me besides: he showed me houses all of gold, silver, rubies, emeralds, pearls, and every sort of precious stone, and all the gems were of pure light. After this, he pointed out to me the mountains surrounding the gardens, and I saw pastures, meadows, and woods so beautiful and rich that the human mind could not conceive of it. In these mountains were many completely walled enclosures, and each of them extended for the distance that could be covered in five hundred years. Within these enclosures were stallions and mares of every color, and they were the most beautiful that man's eyes might ever behold. When I approached them so as to observe them better, they took fright and began to run, and while they were running, the ground that their hooves tossed up consisted entirely of musk and ambergris, and it smelled so very fragrant and strong that all the enclosures were filled with the scent. Moreover, Ridohan led me to another enclosure quite full of birds which were green and yellow and every other color, and

they were wondrously large and smelled exceedingly fragrant. When I approached them, they thought to rise [but] all fell before me, and then so much musk and ambergris fell from their wings that the entire enclosure was filled with the scent. Subsequently he showed me houses in this enclosure that were wholly of gold, silver, and precious gems, and the chairs, beds, and pallets there were all so very lovely and rich that human eyes have never seen their like or ears heard it described. Blessed be God Who made and created them as He pleased!

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

After Ridohan, the guardian of paradise, pointed out the aforesaid things to me, he led me farther and showed me moreover [a river] named Al-Kettinen.⁵⁷ This river is as wide as the distance that could be covered in five hundred years, but no one knows how long it is except Our Lord God Who made it, and it is the one that encircles all the gardens. When I saw it, I marveled greatly at its length and width, but I marveled even more in seeing pitched on both banks of the river many tents so very large that it would be too difficult to recount. These tents are all made of cloth [of gold and samite, and, moreover, these fabrics are] so transparent and luminous that human sight penetrates them much more easily than it would an emerald or topaz. All the chairs and hangings, too, with which the tents are tapestried are of like sort. Inside the tents are born spontaneously, as God pleases, women who are called [h]alcoralen⁵⁸ in Arabic, which means 'wondrous ladies,' for doubtless they are such: they are so very large that each of their eyebrows is as big as the rainbow which appears in the sky's clouds, and they are of indescribably great beauty, and their bodies give off such considerable brightness that it is more difficult to look at them than at the sun. The said tents are closed all around so that no one may enter there, and the aforementioned ladies are born inside as grass does when it first comes forth from the ground. After they are born and shaped, they cover them-

⁵⁷ An unknown name. Latin version: Alketynon.

⁵⁸ *Dalcoralen* in the Old French version, *dalkoralen* in the Latin. The Arabic source probably gave *al-hûr al-'în*, of which the second element means 'beautiful, wide-eyed women' (see note 56 and Koran 52.20.)

selves with their hair, which is more beautiful and bright than mortal mouth could describe. Then they grow until their heads touch the tent tops, and once they reach up there, the tents begin to move somewhat, and as soon as they do so, the angels who guard the tents know that the ladies are born and fully grown as they should be. Now one of these angels goes to the tent which is stirring and finds there the lady born and fully developed, just as I recounted to you. He also finds inside fabrics of gold, pearls, and precious gems which have appeared and are fashioned and completely prepared for the lady's use in clothing herself, and they are more beautiful and rich than man's mind could conceive. The angel says to the lady whom he finds within the tent: "Come away with me, for I want to lead you to one of paradise's castles that I guard." Thereupon the lady looks before her and sees the most beautiful fabrics of gold and silk to be found anywhere fashioned to her measurements, and she dresses at once.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

When the said lady is dressed, the angel whose duty it is to lead her to paradise's castle that is in his keeping, as you heard earlier, immediately takes her by the hand and draws her out of the tent and escorts her to his castle, which shines from as far away as a five hundred years' journey. While they are walking, the lady says a prayer in Arabic which begins thus: *Kadafla hum hal muminina*, which means 'Blessed are the true believers,'⁵⁹ and then she says the entire prayer, which is very long. After finishing it, she says further: "Ah, how blessed is he who has Our Lord's grace as we do!" The angel says to the lady: "Do you know to whom I am taking you?" She answers him: "Yes, you are taking me to such and such a man named so-and-so, and he was the son of such and such a man and woman, and he resides in such and such a place in paradise."⁶⁰ [And the said angels] serve no other function than to escort the ladies who are born within the tents to those men who will be their lords in paradise, as I told you. Certain people questioned me before by

⁵⁹ Koran 23.1: *qad aflaha al-mu'minûna*, 'successful indeed are the believers.'

⁶⁰ Chapter 35 says that the ladies do not know the name of their mate.

saying: "Messenger of God, tell us how the ladies know the names of those who will be their husbands without anyone having informed them." I answered them and said: "Know, dear friends, that God informs them of it, and I shall tell you how. If somebody among those who believe truly in Our Lord desires to eat a certain one of the fruits in paradise, the tree which bears this fruit appears immediately before him with it, and the tree says to him: 'Friend of God, now eat!' He answers it by saying: 'Do tell me, tree, how did you know that I desired to eat some of [your] fruit?' The tree says in turn: 'He Who created me for your benefit informed me of it.'" Moreover, I, Muhammad, also saw that when someone in paradise has in his mouth one of the fruits which are there and he desires some other, the fruit he has immediately changes its taste into that of the other one he wanted, and all this occurs through the power of Our Lord God. And when someone arrives in paradise, all the others who are there go out to meet him and receive him with great joy, as we do with our relatives and friends when they return from some long voyage or a pilgrimage; and his wife and household that he is to have in paradise desire to see him much more than did those others that he had first in this world.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

After I, Muhammad, Messenger of God, had seen these great wonders that I related to you and I had gazed at length upon the gardens and ladies about whom you heard, Gabriel and Ridohan, who accompanied me, led me to a spot called *Çaderat halmonta* [*Sidrat al-muntahâ*],⁶¹ meaning 'spacious place,' and they pointed out to me a tree so very large and beautiful that I could hardly describe it. It consisted entirely of a single, marvelously white pearl so lovely that its beauty was unsurpassed except by that of God and His angels. All its leaves, flowers, and fruits were of like manner, and its fruits possessed all the good flavors that the human mind could imagine. At the foot of this tree sprang up a fountain of water incomparably bright and clear and sweeter than honey. I asked Gabriel what fountain this was, and he answered me by saying

⁶¹ 'The lotus tree of the boundary.' See Koran 53.14.

that it was the spring called *Halkauflar* [*al-Kauthar*],⁶² which means 'fountain of perfect grace.' He also told me: "Know, Muhammad, that Our Lord God created this fountain for you alone and for your use and that [thereby] He has shown you more favor and has exalted you higher than any other prophet who lived hitherto or will live henceforth, for never does He wish to grant this fountain to any other than you. And from now on, you can indeed call yourself Prophet and Messenger of God superior to all the others." Thereupon he took leave of me and told me: "Muhammad, I am departing, for I cannot accompany you beyond here. Our Lord God wants you to go to Him all alone, as He wishes to speak to you privately before you leave. Therefore you will go with Our Lord's grace. And know indeed that you are lord over everyone in the world, just as God has granted that you be." After telling me this, he embraced me, and he and Ridohan remained together, and I went away all by myself, as was Our Lord's will.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

After Gabriel and Ridohan had left me, Muhammad, Messenger of God, all alone, as you heard, I returned in the direction from which I had first come, and I walked until I arrived at the curtains near Our Lord. When I got there, they began to rise so that as I passed one, another rose by itself without anyone touching it. All this occurred through the power of Our Lord, which is so very great that no one can conceive of it or know completely its beginning or end. While going through the curtains in this manner, I proceeded until there were between me and Our Lord God but two curtains: one consisted of darkness and the other, His power's brightness. While looking at these things, I heard behind the curtains a voice speak the passage from the book of the Koran beginning thus: *Hamina haraḩul bime huncila ylai*, which means 'The Messenger believes everything that was said in the account,'⁶³ from the beginning all the way to the end. After the whole prayer, which was very long, had been spoken, Our Lord said to me: "Muhammad, take

⁶² 'Abundance' or 'abundance of good.' See the Koran 108.1.

⁶³ Koran 2.285: *amina ar-rasûl bi-mâ unzila ilayhi*, 'the Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him.'

this account, just as it is in the Koran,⁶⁴ which I give and grant to you. And know that this book comes from My treasures in paradise, which are superior to all other treasures in the world." After He said this to me, I took the book from His hand and thanked Him for the gift that He had presented to me. At that moment there stood between God and me no angel or man or any other thing; just He and I alone faced one another. Then He said to me: "Muhammad, what do people in the world understand about the affairs and community of the heavens?" I answered Him by saying: "Lord, I do not know." He said to me again: "Muhammad, [approach Me." Suddenly the curtains that stood between us rose, and then God took away the sight from my eyes and replaced it in my heart so that I saw with my mind, but not at all with my eyes. Subsequently He said again: "Muhammad,] come closer to Me." I drew near until between Him and me was but the distance of two shots of a crossbow.⁶⁵ Straightway Our Lord placed His hand upon my head so that I felt the coolness of His hand within my heart. Forthwith He taught me all knowledge, so that I knew everything that ever was and will be henceforth. Afterwards He said to me once again: "Muhammad, what do people in the world understand about the affairs and community of the heavens?" I answered Him by saying: "Lord, they are attentive to

⁶⁴ The passage seems to indicate that the account is identical to what is written in the Koran, not that the Koran records Muhammad's receipt of the account from God's hand in heaven. One might argue that the account received here is that of the Prophet's nocturnal voyage which God reports in sura 17, titled "The Night Journey." The Latin version says *accipe historiam istam Alkorani*, 'accept this account of the Koran.' Doubtless both the Old French and Latin passages refer to the heavenly record of all of God's wisdom and acts (chapter 20), of which the Koran reproduces parts. Previous Koranic citations and paraphrases in *Muhammad's Ladder*, as in the preceding sentence, would seem to indicate that the Koran or parts of it were known prior to this moment in the narration. Of course, the Koran does not say or even suggest that God delivered a whole book or part of one directly into Muhammad's hands in heaven (see, e.g., 6.115, 17.106, 25.32, 26.192-96, and 97.1-4), but the Koran 53.1-11 refers to a revelation (on earth?) during which Muhammad stood a very short distance from God. In the Koran 17.93, disbelievers ask Muhammad to perform a miracle: to ascend to heaven by means of a ladder and return with a book. Also, there are specific references to the nocturnal descent of parts of the Koran in 44.3 and sura 97.

⁶⁵ Cf. the same distance in Koran 53.7-9 and in chapter 20 above.

these words written in the Koran: *Haldaraiet vhalkaforat*.”⁶⁶ [God said to me further: “What does *vhalkaforat* mean?”] I told Him: “*Vhalkaforat* means moving one’s feet in order to go to the mosque for saying prayers to God.” Then Our Lord told me: “Muhammad, you have touched on the pure truth.” Next He said to me: “What does *haldaraiet* mean?” I answered Him: “*Haldaraiet* means to greet people and feed them well and in a joyful manner and say prayers while others are resting asleep.”⁶⁷ Our Lord told me: “Ah, Muhammad, I see now that you are completely filled with My grace and all wisdom, for you know the whole truth. And just as you know it to be, so go and tell and reveal it to your people.”

CHAPTER FIFTY

After Our Lord God spoke these words to me and quite filled me with His grace, as I told you, He related to me, furthermore, the following: “Know, Muhammad, that I love your people more than any other because of My love for you. And since I wish them to come nearer to Me than the others, I enjoin them and order you to tell them on My behalf to pray fifty times every day and fast sixty days a year. If they perform these fasts and devotions with all their prayers as is fitting, I promise them henceforth to grant them paradise.” When I, Muhammad, heard this, because of the great love I felt for Our Lord and my great fear of Him, I did not dare at all ask Him to reduce the fasts lest it seem to be on account of gluttony; but regarding the prayers, I asked Him if He would reduce them for me, whereupon He answered me by saying: “Muhammad, for love of you I lessen the fifty prayers that I charged you with having your people perform each day, and I change them into five. And they are to perform three of them during the day and two at night at designated times and with their appropriate devotions and prostrations. When the *halmohadens*, those [who summon people to prayers], cry out, let them place their fingers there where it is fitting. And when they perform these prayers, I shall grant them paradise, just as I told you, and I shall accept the five prayers in place of the fifty.

⁶⁶ *Al-darajât wa 'l-kaffârât*, ‘steps and acts of expiation.’

⁶⁷ Regarding these vigils, see Koran 3.112, 17.79, 51.17, and sura 73.

And if any one of your people does some good deed, I shall count it as ten; and if he commits some sin, I shall count it only as one; and if he asks pardon for it, I shall forgive him for it completely and shall not retain the least recollection of it, for I am compassionate and merciful." When I, Muhammad, saw the great mercy and grace that Our Lord granted me, I was ashamed to beseech or ask more of Him; rather, I took leave of Him and withdrew.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

After I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, took leave of Him, as I related to you, and was returning in the direction from which I had first come, the aforesaid curtains began to rise by themselves, one after the other, just as they had done at my previous passage. While I was descending, I arrived at the [fifth] heaven, where I came upon Moses, my brother; and as soon as he saw me, he asked me what I had accomplished with Our Lord. I told him how He had received me very well and had conferred much honor upon me; and that for reason of love of me, He had changed for me into five the fifty devotions that He first charged me with having my people perform daily; and that of these five devotions, they were to perform three during the day and two at night, as was noted earlier. "But He did not lessen at all for me the sixty days of fasting, nor did I entreat Him about this because of the shame I felt at asking more of Him, [since] He had shown me so much love and grace." Thereupon Moses answered me by saying: "Muhammad, dear brother, I advise you to return to Him and entreat Him to lessen the fasts for you, because your people would not be able to endure them by any means." I had trust in Moses, my brother, and returned to Our Lord, and I asked Him if He would lessen the fasts for me. He reduced them for me and took away ten days. Next I went back to Moses and told him how Our Lord had reduced the fasting for me by ten days. Moses told me to return again and have Him reduce them further for me, since my people still would not be able to endure them. Then I returned and entreated Him so much that He removed another ten, and thereafter I went back to Moses and told him what I had done regarding this matter. He told me again that I should return once more and have them reduced

further. Thereupon I returned to Our Lord and entreated Him to lessen them for me even further. He did so by another ten days, so that there remained only thirty days. Thereafter I went back to Moses and told him about the aforesaid reduction. He pleaded with me again to return, whereupon I answered him by saying: "Ah, Moses, my very dear brother, I swear by the name of God that I will not return to Him any more about this matter, for it would seem to me shameful to go back so many times, and I fear that it would be bothersome to Him and that He might think it was because of gluttony were I to entreat Him further about it." Then I took leave of him and departed.⁶⁸

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

After I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, left Moses, [as] I told you, I came upon Gabriel and Ridohan, the guardian of paradise, who were talking together. I saw that Ridohan was holding in his hand four very beautiful earthen pots, and he spoke to me as follows: "Muhammad, these four pots were given to me so that I could offer them to you for drinking as much from them as you wish. And leave what you do not want." Straightway he extended his hand towards me, gave me one of the pots, and said: "Drink from this, Muhammad, you who are chosen above all other men in the world." Thereupon I took the pot and perceived that its fragrance resembled musk and its taste, milk, and I drank it all. Thereafter he gave me the second, which smelled of ambergris and tasted of honey. I put it to my mouth and did with it what I had done with the first. Next he gave me the third, and I perceived that it smelled of musk, and it tasted like water; it was so clear and delicious that the mortal mind could not imagine it. And he said to me: "Drink this, Muhammad, you who are exalted above all men in the world." Thereupon I took the pot and drained it. Then he said to me: "Take the remaining pot, Muhammad, you who are the best man in the world and the most favored by Our Lord God." I took it and perceived that in smell and taste it resembled wine; therefore I disdained it and

⁶⁸ For the subject of this chapter, see Ibn Ishâq, pp. 186-87. Cf. Genesis 18.22-32, where Abraham dickers with God in an attempt to save the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorra.

refrained from drinking it. Gabriel began to smile and said to me: "Muhammad, do you find yourself dissatisfied with this last drink?" I answered him: "Yes." He said to me in turn: "Know then, Muhammad, that the first pot which Our Lord offered you signifies this: for just as milk nourishes and maintains man's body better than any other drink, so will Our Lord care for and nurture your people above all others until the end [of time]. As for the next pot, which contained honey, know that it was given to you because just as honey is a medicinal substance and it enters into several remedies, so will He be a remedy for your people up to the final day.⁶⁹ The third pot, which contained water, was given to you because just as water purifies and washes away filth better than any other substance, so will He purify and keep your people freer from stain than all the others who existed or are living or will live. And regarding the pot of wine, which causes people to do many foolish and foul things, I tell you: for inasmuch as you disdained it and did not wish to drink it, God will remove all folly and filth from you and your people. But wine will be forbidden to you and them forever, excepting that which you will drink in the glory of paradise."⁷⁰

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

You have heard how Gabriel revealed to me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, the meaning of the said four pots. After explaining this to me, he took me by the hand and led me to a lower garden,⁷¹ and he showed me a body of water brighter and clearer than any other water and much sweeter than honey. Across this body of water lay a lock entirely of crystal, and it extended seventy thousand leagues in length and in breadth, for as far as the eyes can see across level ground. Upon the lock were as many gold and silver goblets as there are clouds in the sky when it is completely full of them. I asked Gabriel what this was, and he answered me by saying that it was a lock Our Lord had given

⁶⁹ On the properties of milk and honey, see Koran 16.66-69. Cf. the allegorical interpretations of milk and honey in *The Romance of Muhammad*, vss. 1481-88.

⁷⁰ Cf. the account limited to milk and wine in Ibn Ishâq, p. 182.

⁷¹ The chapter title given in the listing after the translator's preface indicates that this is the lowest garden.

me, and He had favored and honored me more therein than He ever did any other prophet. Moreover, he told me: "Know that he who will drink the water from this lock is most fortunate, for no one could drink so much of it that it would harm him or he would desire to refuse it. And those in paradise wish much more to drink from this body of water than from all the others here, but none will ever drink of it except those who believe in you, Muhammad, and do not forsake you for any other prophet who has lived up to now or will come henceforth." Further, Gabriel told me the following: "Know, Muhammad, that Our Lord God loves you so much that He wishes for me to show you all the forms of the people who are living now and all those who are dead.⁷² He wishes, too, for you to see what hell is like and the things within it and, afterwards, the pains and torments that miscreants suffer. And you will relate and reveal them to your people exactly as you see them so that they may know which [from among them] will go to the torments of hell and which will not. He wants, also, for you to tell them to act in conformity with what you command them." Thereupon I thanked Gabriel and entreated him to show me these things just as he had told me.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

After I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, asked Gabriel to show me the aforecited things, he took me by the hand and began to relate to me the following: "Know, Muhammad, that below the region where people are⁷³ is another which consists entirely of fire, and so do its people; and there is a sea of fire, along with all the fish in it. Beyond this region is another consisting of fire and another sea, and all the people and fish there are made up wholly of fire. And thus there are seven regions, one after the other, and in each of them is a sea, and the regions, seas, people, and fish there, too, are of fire. Every kind of

⁷² Perhaps this sentence refers to the moral characteristics of different nations and peoples mentioned in chapter 70.

⁷³ I.e., the earth. The chapter title given in the listing just after the translator's preface says that Muhammad now sees the first region of hell. However, he does not see hell until chapter 71.

creature whatsoever there consists entirely of fire." I asked Gabriel and entreated him to tell me what thing lay beneath these regions, and he answered me by saying that there was a stone which held up the said regions, and beneath the stone was a fish which supported it, and the fish held its head and tail joined in the form of a circle. Next I asked him what thing lay beneath the fish, and he answered me that below this fish was nothing but the shadow of darkness, and no one knew what lay beyond that but God. Thereafter I asked him moreover to tell me what held up the region where we were then.⁷⁴ He answered me by saying that it was held up by Our Lord's order. I said to him: "What is the nature of this order?" and he told me: "You have asked well. Know that the order is of the following nature: there is a green stone, and an angel holds it in his palm, and the angel stands on the back of a very large fish so strong that it bears and supports upon itself everything there is below heaven. I tell you further that God created this region by itself, for it is joined to no other, and He named it *Aranka* [*ar-Ramaka*], which means 'region unto itself.' Below this region He placed the wind called *arre halakym* [*ar-rîh al-'aqîm*] in Arabic, meaning 'sterile wind,' and it is named so because it is harsh and cruel and quite pitiless, just like a barren woman who bears no child and has in herself none of the compassion that other women have. Since it is so harsh and cruel, Our Lord has it held in check with a thousand iron restraints, and at each restraint He placed a thousand angels who hold it. With this wind He annihilated Dathan and Abiron [Abiram] and all their people.⁷⁵ On a different occasion He slew another people named Hade ['Âd] because they refused to believe His messengers,⁷⁶ and in order to do so, God ordered the guardian of this wind to open the gate a little in that people's direction. Then the guardian said: 'Shall I open it to the width of an ox's snout?' Our Lord answered him that opening the gate this much would be enough to destroy the whole world. 'Open it, rather, as much as the thickness of a small child's finger.' He did so and let the wind issue

⁷⁴ Although Gabriel and Muhammad are said to be in a lower or the lowest celestial garden (chapter 53), the following description of the garden's support system corresponds more or less to hell's substructure given immediately above and in subsequent chapters. Similar descriptions usually refer to the earth's support system in Muslim cosmologies.

⁷⁵ See Numbers 16, where the earth swallows up Dathan and Abiram.

⁷⁶ Koran 7.65-72, 51.41, and 69.6-7.

forth towards that people for seven days and seven nights, and it slew them all. And a short time before Judgment Day, Our Lord will destroy all the mountains, castles, towns, and every building on earth by means of this wind, with the result that nothing will remain there, just as He Himself says in the Koran and He told me: 'If someone asks you what will become of the mountains on Judgment Day, you will answer him that I shall pull them all out at their bases and shall turn them into plains, so that there will be no place on earth higher than another.'"⁷⁷ Subsequently Gabriel related to me still more and told me that Our Lord will have the sinners in hell tormented by means of this wind, for it will flay them all, and afterwards the fire's flame will burn them. Thus they will be tormented more harshly than anyone could describe.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

You have heard how Gabriel told me about the things in the first of the aforesaid seven regions and how they all consisted of fire and, likewise, the seas, people, fish, and every creature there. Now I shall tell you about the second one, just as he himself revealed it to me. Know that this region is called *Halgelada* [*al-Jalada*], and it is very large. Our Lord God placed there hell's scorpions, which are as big as mules, and their tails are as long or longer than a lance's shaft. In each tail are three hundred sixty joints, and each joint has three hundred sixty points, and in each stinger [are] three hundred sixty pots quite full of venom so very powerful that if one were to put a single one of these pots at the center of the world, the trees, bodies of water, animals, people, and all other things alive there would be destroyed through the great stench issuing from it and the extreme horror that it causes. Our Lord has given these scorpions power over the sinners in hell, for when they come upon them, they take them by the hair on their heads and flay them all the way from head to foot; consequently, they are left so stunned that it is impossible to tell if they are alive or dead. After flaying them in this manner, they pour venom on them from one of the aforesaid pots, and it is so very powerful that here it separates the flesh, there the bones,

⁷⁷ Koran 20.105-07.

and then the ligaments, and thus they destroy them completely. Afterwards Our Lord remakes them just as they were before so that they may be tormented further.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

After telling me about the second region, as you heard, Gabriel next told me about the third, named *Arcka* [*'Araqa*]. Our Lord filled this region with beasts of hell called *tatas*,⁷⁸ and they are as large as big mountains, and all of them, most hideous and blacker than a very dark night, are made up of fire and earth combined. Moreover, these beasts are completely surrounded by darkness more gloomy than the blackest night when it is very dark. Each of them has within itself a venom so very powerful that it burns much more harshly than the great fire of hell. When Our Lord orders these beasts to torment the sinners, they seize them immediately and place them beneath themselves, and then they open their mouths and strew their venom on them so that they melt just as wax does before a fire. And for them this punishment is worse and harsher than all the others that they first saw or felt in hell.⁷⁹

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

You have heard about the third region. Now I shall tell you about the fourth, named *Halburba* [*al-Harbâ*]. Know that Our Lord God filled this region with hell's serpents, which are longer and thicker than anyone could tell. Each of these snakes has eighteen thousand fangs in its mouth, and each of the fangs is as big as the largest of those trees called palms to be found in the whole world, and the roots of each of the fangs have [seventy] thousand pots all full of a venom so powerful and caustic that it burns hell's fire. I tell you further that were Our Lord to order one of these serpents to strike the largest mountain in the world with a single one of its fangs, it would destroy it totally and would turn it into ashes, so great are its strength and its venom. And they are blacker and

⁷⁸ Or *catas*, perhaps from Arabic *al-qitât*, 'cats.'

⁷⁹ I.e., in the first region of hell. Latin version: *primo in inferno*.

more hideous to behold than anything that could be related by man's mouth. When they come upon the sinners, they touch them slightly with their fangs and strew a little of this venom on them, and at once the venom destroys them entirely and separates their limbs and joints piecemeal all the way from their heads to their toenails. The least pain that these serpents inflict upon the sinners is more grievous and harsher for them than any other of the greatest in all of hell, with the result that they would gladly die a thousand times and more a day were it not that Our Lord does not wish it in order for them to endure more torments.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, have told you about the fourth region. Now I wish to describe to you the fifth, named *Malta* [*Malthâm*], just as Gabriel revealed it to me. Know that Our Lord God placed in this region hell's sulfurous stones and filled it completely with them. Our Lord prepared these stones for tormenting the sinners who will be in hell. They resemble red sulfur, and they are bright as well, notwithstanding that the smallest of them is seventy thousand times larger than the biggest mountain in the whole world. These are the stones about which Our Lord speaks in the Koran there where He says: "[We] have prepared stones in hell to burn and torment sinners."⁸⁰ For indeed it is so: when hell's angels tie one of these stones to a sinner's neck, then they lead him to hell's fire, and when he arrives there, they put the fire to the stone, and immediately it ignites so that the stone and the sinner, too, together become a single flame, and this flame rises so very greatly above the sinner that it is impossible to imagine. And these are the words that God says in the Koran: "The faces of sinners will be covered with fire."⁸¹ And, moreover, He declares further: "Who are those who will not be frightened when Our Lord assigns them punishment in hell upon their faces after Judgment Day?"⁸² Therefore people should take much care not to act contrary to

⁸⁰ Koran 2.24. The stones refer to idols which heathens worship. See Koran 66.6.

⁸¹ Koran 14.50 and 23.104.

⁸² Koran 3.105 and 21.39?

the faith, and they should fear very greatly, too, the aforementioned punishments, such as those sulfurous stones, serpents, the beasts [called] *tatas*, scorpions, and the said sterile wind, for all these punishments are cumulative, just as Our Lord says in the Koran: "We have added affliction upon affliction for the sinners in hell in order to torment them more harshly."⁸³

CHAPTER [FIFTY]-NINE

I shall tell you what the sixth region is like, just as Gabriel revealed it to me, and it is named *Çaykiqua* [*Sijjîn*]. Our Lord God placed there the books and records of all the sins that men will have committed up to Judgment Day. The names of all the sinners are written there and, likewise, which sins each of them committed and why and how and where, just as Our Lord declares in the Koran when He says: "Watch out, sinner, because the book of your wrongs is in *Çaykiqua*,"⁸⁴ for, doubtless, sinners will be snared and damned through this book on the great Day of Judgment. I tell you further that in this region is a sea of very bitter waters called *halmohale*⁸⁵ in Arabic, which means 'horrible,' and indeed they are so, for they are incomparably horrible, and even the beasts of hell abhor seeing them. And I, Muhammad, swear by God Who is Master of my soul that this water is so bitter, hot, and powerful that if someone were to place in it a very hard stone, be it as large as the [big]gest mountain [in the] world, straightway it would melt entirely. On Our Lord God's order the sinners bathe in this water, and then they drink some, and after they have drunk, immediately everything they have inside their bodies is destroyed and is reduced to nothing.

CHAPTER SIXTY

You have heard about the sixth region. Now I shall tell you, according

⁸³ Koran 16.88 and 78.30.

⁸⁴ Koran 83.7.

⁸⁵ Cerulli, p. 241, n. 224, proposes *al-mahâla*, *al-mahûla*, or *al-mihwâla* related to the word for 'fright.' The editors of *Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 263, n. 117, suggest a connection with *al-muhl*, 'boiling water.'

to what Gabriel related to me, about the seventh, named *Hagib* [*Ajiba*],⁸⁶ which means 'wondrous,' for doubtless it is such. Know that in this region are the devil's seat and dwelling and realm, and his armies and people are there. But, nevertheless, he is bound, for from the beginning of his disobedience to Our Lord, the good angels threw him and his followers out of heaven, and afterwards they seized him and bound him with iron chains, one hand in front and the other behind, and his feet, too, in like manner. Thus is he shackled in the seventh region. He is so large that from the place which he occupies, his head touches this region where we are, and his two horns pass above it. The time will come yet when he will be unbound, and they will send him into this world, and many of the other demons will come with him. Then he will bring all the arrogance and temerity of hell with him and, also, every one of the sinful souls of the miscreants, and all these are his armies and troops who protect him night and day and remain surrounding him and his dwelling. I tell you further that in the middle of the seventh region is a partition entirely of darkness [fashioned] in such a manner that no one can approach the devil without first crossing this blackness. Behind the darkness lies a castle where the devil's seat is. The moats surrounding the castle are quite full of many different kinds of poison. All the walls, towers, battlements, and houses in the castle consist of very black fire that burns forever from its own substance. On one side of the castle is a gate leading into great hell, and in the opposite direction is another leading to the wind called *açankaril* [*zamharîr*].⁸⁷ And I asked Gabriel what lies beneath the aforesaid things. He answered me that there are air and darkness, and no one knows what thing lies beyond there except Our Lord God Who created and fashioned everything.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

After Gabriel related the aforesaid matters to me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, I entreated him to tell me what Our Lord God will do shortly before Judgment Day with this world and the people

⁸⁶ 'Strange.'

⁸⁷ 'Intense cold.'

who are there, whether He will slay everyone and will destroy everything or will leave them just as they are. He answered me by saying: "Know, Muhammad, that when Our Lord wants to separate this world from the other, He will order a pit named *halfalak* [*al-falq*],⁸⁸ which is quite full of fire and stands near hell, to be opened. This fire is so very powerful and hot that it will burn hell's fire as easily as our fire burns cotton when it is ignited. And when the said fire reaches the great sea that runs throughout hell and the other seas there about which I told you, it will dry them all up so that it will seem as if water was never there. And the aforementioned great sea is the one that divides hell [into] the seven regions about which you heard earlier. When the fire *halfalak* reaches these seven regions, it will burn them all and will make them as hot and red as fiery coals. The said fire will burn every one of these things as quickly as a blink of the eye. Then all of hell's serpents and stones about which I told you and the beasts [named] *tatas* and the sterile wind and everything else there will be tormented by the fire *halfalak* just as a live fish is when placed in a great fire."

CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO

Even though I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, had asked Gabriel about many matters and he had answered me regarding them all, still I entreated him to tell me if the aforesaid seven regions were peopled as soon as Our Lord God created them or later. He answered me and said: "Know, Muhammad, that after Our Lord created these seven regions, He did not then fix them in one spot; rather, they were just like a boat upon the sea, and they went at one time to the right and at another to the left, and now towards the east and then towards the west, and sometimes they stretched out, and at others they gathered together just like sheets. Thus they were very harrowed since they were not fixed in any one place. When the angels saw this, they went before Our Lord and fell upon their faces and remained prostrate a very long time and spoke thus: 'Lord God, we know indeed that You made the world only in order to place there inhabitants who serve You, just as You placed us

⁸⁸ 'Crack, pit.'

in heaven. We pray then that You look upon these seven regions which go frolicking upon the sea, now here, now there, as if they were a boat and that through Your compassion, You see to it that they are no longer troubled in this way.⁸⁹ Then Our Lord was attentive to their prayers and ordered straightway one of the eight angels⁹⁰ who bear His throne to go down all the way below these seven regions and to hold them up. This angel descended immediately, just as Our Lord commanded him. When he arrived there, he stretched out his arms along with his hands, one towards the east and the other to the west, and he took the said regions and placed them upon his shoulders and arms; thus he holds them quite still. And since the angel had no foothold, Our Lord gave him a most beautiful stone, entirely green and square, upon which to stand. Since there was nothing supporting the stone, Our Lord ordered one of the bulls from the region of paradise to hold up this stone on its shoulders, and immediately it did so, and it supports it. Since the bull had nothing on which to place its hooves firmly, Our Lord gave it a very large fish upon which to put them and support itself completely. Now I shall tell you how large the bull and the fish are. Know that there is as much distance from one of the bull's horns to the other as a man could cover in five hundred years, and from the horns all the way to the shoulders, a like distance, and from the shoulders to where the tail is joined, just as much, and from there to the tip of its tail and hooves, the same distance. These things are arranged so that the aforementioned angel holds up the seven regions, and the stone [the angel, and the bull the stone], and the fish is so large that it supports the bull. This fish rests upon the great sea that supports everything, and the fish is called Leviathan. The bull about which I spoke to you has never been tired, nor will its strength ever give out; rather, it is constantly stronger so that it bears all. There is yet another thing [to be said] about this bull: all the fresh waters that run throughout the world and rain from the sky enter through its nose and go down to its belly,

⁸⁹ The angels' request regarding hell and the well-being of its inhabitants makes no sense. The 'floating' regions and God's creation of bearers and stabilizers in this chapter usually appear in explanations for the substructure of the earth, not hell.

⁹⁰ Chapter 21 indicates that there are four such angels, but they will be eight on Judgment Day.

which is not filled by all this, nor will it be until Judgment Day. And know that the angel, stone, bull, and fish fear very much the great earthquake that will occur a little before the end."

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE

After Gabriel related to me the aforesaid matters, I next entreated him most gently to tell me what strength and power each of these things individually will have on Judgment Day. He answered me by saying: "Know, Muhammad, that Our Lord God has granted very great power to each of the things about which I told you, but all this is nothing in comparison with the power that He has retained for Himself. I shall tell you, furthermore, that each of the said seven regions has its own sea, and this region where we are has seven of them, and thus there are fourteen seas. In addition to all this, there is another very large sea standing at the mouth of hell, and it is called the sea of seas, and if this great sea did not exist, hell's fire would burn the whole world." After this I asked Gabriel what lies beneath hell, and he answered me that there are very dense air and darkness, but no one knows either the length or width of these two things: "Yet one can indeed know this much about it: everything rests upon a place named Çare [Tharâ], and human intelligence cannot succeed in knowing what lies beyond there—only Our Lord God Who created everything can, just as He Himself relates in the Koran when He says: 'God is Lord of all the heavens and all the lands and everything between and that, too, which lies above Çare.'⁹¹ Know that the region where we are rests and is spread out on the flanks of a fish, and it is joined on all sides to a very large mountain named Kaf [Qâf] that completely encloses and surrounds it. And this region is as thick as the distance that could be covered in five hundred years."

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR

After Gabriel told me the thickness of the earth where we are, I prayed him moreover not to be vexed by my desire to question him further. He

⁹¹ Koran 20.6, where *tharâ* means 'soil' or 'earth.'

answered me that he was not bothered then and that I should inquire quite assuredly. Then I asked and entreated him to tell me how long and wide and thick each of the said seven regions about which you heard is in itself. Thereupon he answered me and said: "Know, Muhammad, that each of the seven regions about which you ask me is in itself as long as the distance that could be covered in a thousand years, and it is just as wide, and it is as thick as the distance that could be traveled in five hundred years. Between these seven regions and the one where we are is another thing, named *halmange* [*al-mawj*],⁹² and it is as thick as the space that could be covered in five hundred years. *Halmange* means 'air,' and between it and the first heaven is as much space as one could travel in two hundred twenty years. Know that in this air called *halmange*, Our Lord God created very large birds, and their backs are completely black, and their heads, too, but their beaks are yellow, and their chests and bellies, all white. These are the birds that carried the sulfurous stones with which Sodom and Gomorra were burned. Each of the birds carries three such stones in its beak, and upon each stone is inscribed: 'He who disobeys Our Lord will be damned, and he who is obedient will be saved.'"

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

Subsequent to the aforementioned matters, Gabriel said further to me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, that I should tell and reveal to people how Our Lord had created faith.⁹³ And after creating [it], He showed it to all the heavens and lands, to the boulders, stones, mountains, knolls, and valleys and said to them: "I have created faith, which is a very precious thing, and I give [it] to you to keep under the following terms: if you guard [it] well, I shall reward you well, and if you guard it badly, know that I shall make you atone for it very dearly." Hearing this, they were afraid and did not wish to accept it in this manner. When Our Lord saw that the aforesaid things did not wish to accept faith in the way I related to you, He gave it to Adam for him and his descendants to guard, and he accepted it and promised to keep it for him-

⁹² 'Wave.' See note 99 below.

⁹³ *Leauté*, 'law,' 'faith,' 'loyalty,' 'trust.'

self and them.⁹⁴ And know that the greatest law of all is for a man to know himself, for the man who understands himself understands all other things well. I tell you furthermore that faith is constantly present before Our Lord, as are the heavens and lands. And just as a small grain of mustard appears tiny in a man's large palm, or a very small goblet on an immense table, the heavens and lands seem equally little compared with Our Lord's throne. And faith is even larger than the throne, for man knows all this because of it. Owing to faith which Our Lord God made so large, all men and women, birds, beasts, fish, and every other creature praise Him. But frogs praise Him ten times more than any other animal in existence, and they will not cease praising Him until Judgment Day. When that day comes, Our Lord will order them to become earth and turn into dust, and they will transform themselves thus immediately.

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX

When Gabriel told me what is related above, I marveled greatly at it, but all the same I asked him very gently afterwards to tell me what it is fated to be like when Judgment Day comes and in what manner people will gather to hear and receive judgment. He answered me and said: "Know, Muhammad, that on the Day of Great Judgment all people will gather, men and women alike, and they will arrive naked and barefoot, just as they came into this world the day they were born, and they will all be thirty years old." I questioned him further and said: "Gabriel, will they not be ashamed when they see [themselves] quite naked?" And he answered me: "No, for each will have so much to do looking both within himself and at his sins that he will not be concerned with the others anymore. Apart from all this, they will be constantly looking up towards heaven in order to see Our Lord, Who will arrive to pronounce judgment. They will be so distressed and anxious to see Him that they will all perspire according to the magnitude of the sins with which they recognize themselves to be burdened, for one of them will perspire down to his hips, another to his knees, and some other to his feet.

⁹⁴ See Koran 33.72.

When Our Lord sees their torment and anguish, He will take pity on them and will order His angels who bear His throne to take it and place it upon a terrain that is all very much whiter than pure silver. And blood was never shed nor any sin committed within this terrain. There Our Lord God will reveal Himself to everyone, and this day will be the first time that the eyes of men behold Our Lord."

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

After Gabriel related the aforesaid things to me, I entreated him further to tell me in what manner Our Lord God will judge people. He answered me thus: "Know, Muhammad, that when Our Lord sits on His throne which the angels have placed upon the said white terrain and all people are assembled before Him for judgment, He will have a man summoned by his name so that everyone will see and hear him, and He will have him come before Him and present all the good acts and wrongs that he did during his lifetime. Next He will have them read before everyone, and afterwards God will say: 'Is there anyone who has a complaint against this man?' Then all who wish to lodge a complaint against him will come forward. Our Lord will consider the good and evil that this man did, and if He finds that he did as much good as evil, Our Lord will put those whom he wronged in possession of his good, and thereupon he will be acquitted of his wrongs and will be saved. If perchance he did more good than wrong, the surplus of goodness will remain his and will be for his benefit. And if the wrongs outnumber good deeds, he will be listed among those who must go to the punishment of hell's fire. On that day there will be no other redemption, not through gold or silver or any other thing, except through good acts that compensate for the harm a man did unduly to others and himself. All secret things will be revealed there so that nothing remains unknown concerning what one man did to another, for each will accuse the other according to what he knows. If perhaps someone committed any sin against himself that is not known or denounced by the others, all his limbs will avow it and make it known, just as Our Lord God declares and says in the Koran: 'The final day will be wondrous, for the eyes, hands, feet, and all the other members will bear witness against sin-

ners.’⁹⁵ If perchance those who lodge complaints against others cannot be compensated for the wrong they suffered, and the good that they receive from their debtors is not adequate for them, then they will be placated by what Our Lord says to them: ‘Do not be dismayed, for I shall make good and retribute to you from My grace all that is wanting.’ And to the debtors He will say: ‘Since you do not have the means to pay what you owe and no good remains in you and you are burdened with sins, behold! I give you fire as your mother forevermore.’ Our Lord God will do all this very swiftly, for He is most attentive and quick in His accounting and judgment. In a very short while everything will be brought to a conclusion, so that there will be no one [who] has a charge to lodge against another from that time forward. On that day there will be no angel, prophet, martyr, or any holy man who does not tremble because of the great fear that he has of Our Lord when he sees Him investigate and inquire into matters so carefully and judge so rightly and firmly.”

CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

After Gabriel related to me all this concerning the aforesaid matters, I entreated him further not to be vexed by what I had asked him and wished to ask him yet. He answered me that he was not vexed and that I should question him as much as I desired with complete assurance. I then asked and entreated him to tell me whether the heavens and regions and other things mentioned above are held together among themselves or are separated so that one does not touch the other. He answered me that he would do this most gladly, but it was a very difficult and hard thing to understand, “for I must repeat something about which I told you earlier and, subsequently, [relate] other things so difficult and obscure that no one could comprehend them unless he were quite filled with the grace of Our Lord.” After saying this, he began to relate to me the following: “Muhammad, you indeed know, just as I told you, that Our Lord God created all the aforesaid seven regions and ordered an angel named Arçaniel [Razqâ’îl], who is beneath the seventh region, to bear

⁹⁵ Koran 24.24 and 41.20.

them on his shoulders. And he is one of the spiritual angels and the companion of the Angel of Death. This angel's height equals the distance that could be covered in five hundred years, and he straddles the aforementioned bull named Beamut [Bahamût].⁹⁶ The bull is wondrously large, and it stands on the green stone, as I told you. Above the stone lies one part of the large mountain named Kaf, and the other part is below. Moreover, air and darkness are beneath the stone, and the darkness extends and continues all the way to the body of water that lies below. Between the water and the darkness is a great fish which holds up all these things, as was said earlier. Surrounding the fish is the aforementioned great wind that is called 'sterile.' Likewise I told you about the large mountain named Çare, which is divided all around into seven parts that stand completely by themselves and are separated from the other regions, and each of the seven parts is as far from the other regions as the distance a man could travel in five hundred years. But the very large mountain Kaf is the one that encloses and surrounds all these things."

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, understood very well and clearly all these matters which Gabriel related to me. Afterwards I asked him whether or not there are men beyond this mountain named Kaf. He answered me that in the air are living creatures shaped like men. Then I asked him what sort of men they are. He answered me that no one knows except Our Lord God Who made them. Subsequently I asked him what lies between the heaven where Our Lord's throne is and the next heaven directly below it. He answered me that Our Lord's rooster, about which you heard earlier, is there, and it is so big that it holds its crest in the heaven where the said throne is and its feet in the lowest region of all. I asked him, further, what region this is. He answered me that it is Kaf, which he mentioned to me before. Afterwards he told me that from Kaf seventeen branches rise just like tree boughs, and these branches stretch upwards through the heavens as far as the eighth so

⁹⁶ See Behemoth and Leviathan in Job 40.15-41.34.

that the heavens are all supported on the branches without touching one another. Owing to the branches that thus hold them up, there is as great a space between one heaven and the next as was indicated above. Beyond this large mountain Kaf are the seven seas that surround everything, and the mouth of hell lies in the middle of the seventh, last region like a great pit. All these things are supported upon the shoulders of the said angel whose feet stand on the back of the large fish about which you heard earlier and which holds up the stone and the bull and the other aforesaid things. Around the mouth of hell are [seven] seas entirely of fire that burns with most marvelous intensity, and these seas join and form one great sea. There Our Lord God has bathed and purged the souls of sinners who forsake Him and renounce Him in their lifetime. He will have them tormented thus until Judgment Day, and then He will judge them according to what they merit.⁹⁷ When Judgment Day comes, Our Lord will raise hell on high so that all will see it, and paradise, likewise, which will stand above. And over hell will also stand the bridge called Azirat, as I shall tell you later. But now I tell you this about it: its length equals the distance one could travel in five hundred years.⁹⁸ And beside this bridge is a place named *marge halmagfuf* [*marj al-mak-fuf*], which means 'secret or hidden meadow.'⁹⁹ This meadow is as long as the distance that could be covered in five hundred years, and it is just as wide, and it lies between the earth where we are and the first of the said seven regions. Beyond this meadow lies another which is as thick as the distance one could travel in thirty years, and it stands between the

⁹⁷ This passage does not describe a purgatorial region in the Roman Catholic sense—i.e., one reserved for sinners who all will eventually enter heaven. *Muhammad's Ladder* does not mention a separate region where only those sinners who will be admitted to paradise await judgment. In chapter 78 below, on Judgment Day the damned will fall from Azirat Bridge directly into hell, but those worthy of salvation will endure varying periods of purgation or affliction by fire on the bridge before entering heaven. The earliest mention in Christian writings of a specific region for souls awaiting admission to paradise appears in the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*, written in 731—see Jacques LeGoff, *La naissance du purgatoire*, pp. 155-58.

⁹⁸ Cf. the different measurements of Azirat's length in chapters 76 and 78.

⁹⁹ According to Cerulli, p. 243, n. 280, the Castilian translator misread Arabic *mawj*, 'wave,' and wrote a form of *marj*, 'meadow.' Here *marge halmagfuf* is *halmange*, or *al-mawj*, translated as 'air' in chapter 64.

said first region and the second one beneath it. Between the second region and the third one underneath is yet another meadow as thick as a thirty years' journey, and each of the other meadows that lie in order between one region and the next all the way down to the seventh, last region is of the same thickness. And each of these seven regions is as thick as the distance that could be covered in two hundred fifty years.

CHAPTER SEVENTY

After Gabriel related to me the aforesaid matters, he next told me very amiably: "Ah! Muhammad, if you knew how Our Lord God distributed His gifts among His creatures, you would surely be very delighted by it." Then I asked him most gently to tell it to me, and he answered me that he would gladly do so. Straightway he began to relate to me the following: "Know, Muhammad, that when Our Lord created the heavens and lands, He distributed His grace among the heavens in this manner: He divided it into ten parts, of which He gave nine [to the] angels present in the eighth heaven where His throne is. He divided the remaining tenth portion into another ten parts, and He gave nine of them to the angels in the seventh heaven. He divided this remaining tenth portion into another ten parts, too, and He gave nine to the angels in the sixth heaven. Further, He divided the remaining tenth part into ten others, of which He gave nine to the angels in the fifth heaven. He divided the remainder into another ten parts, and He gave nine of them to the angels in the fourth heaven. [From] the remaining tenth part He made ten others, of which He gave nine to the angels in the third heaven. He divided the remainder into another ten parts, and He gave nine of them to the angels in the second heaven. From the tenth that remained He made another ten parts, and He gave nine of them to the angels in the first heaven. He divided the remaining tenth part into yet another ten, of which He gave nine to the spirits residing in the fire called elemental. He divided the remainder into another ten parts, and He gave nine of them to the jinn living in the air near the said fire and above the air that we see. Further, He divided the remaining tenth part into ten others, and He gave nine of them to the birds. He divided the remainder into another ten parts, of which He gave nine to the fishes. And to men He gave

enough of His grace so that He made them recognize all things and distinguish among them. Afterwards God created evil on earth, and He distributed it among the nations as follows: He divided folly into ten parts, of which He gave nine to the nations called God and Magog.¹⁰⁰ From the remaining tenth portion He created envy, and He divided it into ten parts and gave nine to the Arabians. From the remainder He created debauchery, and He divided it into ten parts, and He gave nine of them to the Indians. From the remaining tenth portion He created falsehood, and He divided it into ten parts and gave nine to the Jews. From the remainder He created arrogance and divided it into ten parts, of which He gave nine to the Christians. From what remained He created avarice and divided it into ten parts and gave nine of them to the Persians. From the remaining tenth portion He created ignorance and divided it into ten parts, of which he gave nine to the Ethiopians. From the remainder He created haughtiness, and He divided it into ten parts, and He gave nine to those in Barbary. And He distributed the remainder throughout the rest of the world. Afterwards He created pleasure and divided it into ten parts, of which He distributed nine to women and the remaining portion throughout the world. After this, moreover, He created paradise, too, which He divided into ten parts, and He distributed nine to those of your religion and the rest among all the others.”

CHAPTER SEVENTY-ONE

You have heard the matters that Gabriel related to me and how he told me them. Afterwards he began to sigh very deeply. I asked him why he was sighing so. Thereupon he replied to me that he was doing this because of the hardships that he saw sinners had to endure in hell. Then I asked if in hell there were castles and towers or palaces or houses or things similar to those in paradise. He answered me by saying that he would indeed show me this. Thereupon he took me by the hand and led me to a place whence I saw hell and its gates, which number seven, arranged one upon another. These gates are so very hot that if the least hot of them were in the east and a man in the west were to look at it,

¹⁰⁰ See note 35.

the brain in his head would gush out through his nostrils because of the great heat that it produces. Each of the gates has its own name. The first is called *Gihenne* [*Jahannam*]; the second, *Lada* [*Lazâ*]; the third, *Halhatina* [*al-Hutama*]; the fourth, *Halzair* [*al-Sa'îr*]; the fifth, *Çakar* [*Saqar*]; the sixth, *Halgahym* [*al-Jahîm*]; and the seventh, *Halkehuya* [*al-Hâwiya*].¹⁰¹ Between one gate and the next is as much space as could be covered in seventy thousand years.¹⁰² Before each of the said gates is a great company [of] devils and men who are tormented in hell. Our Lord God has these devils and men go before the gates every day, and He has them look upon the good things in paradise and this world, and in looking at them, they suffer twice as much. Outside each of the gates, towards the left side, are seventy thousand mountains consisting wholly of fire, and each of the mountains has seventy thousand springs of fire, and from each of the fountains flow seventy thousand rivers of fire as well. Near each of these rivers are seventy thousand castles of fire, and in each of the castles, seventy thousand rooms of fire, and in each of the rooms, seventy thousand ladies of fire, too, who are more ugly and horrible to behold than man's heart could imagine. When the sinners enter these rooms, the said ladies embrace them and squeeze them so tightly in their arms that it seems to them just like being in a very great press. Furthermore, they frighten them so terribly that as a result they lose consciousness. Then they burn them so severely that they could not be burned worse by any other fire. And this punishment seems to them so great that they would rather die seventy thousand times a day than endure it, for each of the ladies inflicts upon them seventy thousand kinds of torments. Besides all this, on either bank of the said rivers are seventy thousand trees of fire, and each of the trees has seventy thousand varieties of fruits, and in each of the fruits [are] seventy thousand worms, of which the smallest has enough venom within itself to poison all the people in the world in such a way as to separate the flesh from the bones. At the foot of each of the trees are seventy thousand dragons and just as many of those scorpions about which you

¹⁰¹ These are different names for hell itself given in the Koran. They mean, respectively, 'Hell,' 'Flaming Fire,' 'Crushing Disaster,' 'Burning Fire,' 'Scorching Fire,' 'Fierce Fire,' and 'Abyss.' The Koran 15.44 says that hell has seven gates.

¹⁰² Cf. the different measurements given in chapters 64 and 69.

heard earlier. And all of hell is filled with beasts of different kinds in order to torment sinners, and each of the beasts inflicts upon them seventy thousand sorts of torments so very cruel that they would more gladly die seventy thousand times a day, if such were possible, than endure these punishments.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

When Gabriel finished relating the aforesaid matters to me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, just as I recounted them to you, I entreated him most gently to tell me what the pains of hell are like and in what manner they are dispensed in conformity with the transgressions that sinners have committed. He answered me that he would most gladly do so. Thereupon he began to tell me the following: "Know, Muhammad, that Our Lord God ordained and established the first gate of hell named *Gihenne* in order to give it to those who worship idols and believe in images, just as He relates in the Koran when He says: 'You who worship idols of wood and metal, you will become dry logs in hell and material to fuel the fire.'¹⁰³ The second named *Lada* is prepared for those who believe in the true religion of God and then abandon it. The third named *Halhatina* is prepared for those who amass wealth by wrongful means and the peoples called Gog and Magog, for there they will be burned and tormented harshly; the fourth named *Halzair*, for those who play dice or some other sort of game, because they get angry and utter words which they ought not against Our Lord; the fifth called *Çakar*, for those who do not say the prayers that they ought [and do not give] alms [from their possessions] to the poor; the sixth named *Halgahym*, for those who are unwilling to believe what the prophets and messengers of Our Lord say, rather they deny what they say and dispute their words, just as Our Lord Himself says in the Koran: 'You who do not believe my prophets and messengers, the fire of Halgahym will be yours and will fall to your lot.'¹⁰⁴ The seventh called *Halkehuya* is prepared for those who deceive and cheat people in regard to weights and measures. All the remainder of hell is divided into seven parts, of which

¹⁰³ Koran 21.98.

¹⁰⁴ Koran 48.13 or 72.23?

six are prepared for those who give Our Lord God a partner and say that some other is equal to Him and for those, too, who are unwilling to endure hardship or inconvenience for Our Lord and prefer to do what they wish rather than have His grace.¹⁰⁵ And all the abovesaid sorts of people are erased from the book of life forevermore."

CHAPTER SEVENTY-THREE

After the matters which you heard above, Gabriel related to me further that on Judgment Day, Our Lord God will have brought before Him a beast so very big that it is impossible to imagine. Seventy thousand ranks of angels will lead the beast, and each of the ranks will be as large as all the sky and the whole earth. These angels will prepare in hell four pillars, of which each will be as long as the distance that could be covered in seventy [thousand] years, and its width will be half of that. The pillars will be set up in the four corners of hell, and the aforesaid beast will be attached there in order to torment sinners, as you will here later. This beast has thirty thousand mouths, and in each mouth, thirty thousand teeth, and each of them is thirty thousand times sharper than the sharpest sword that could be found in the whole world. In each of its lips is a very large iron ring and an enormous chain, too, and in each chain are seventy thousand iron links, and at each of the links is an angel who holds it. These angels are so large and strong that each of them could swallow the whole world without ever noticing it. What shall I tell you about the beast's appearance? Know that it is so awfully hideous and horrible to behold that if it were at one end of the world and a man at the opposite end were to see it, it is so frightening that he would of necessity lose consciousness and memory because of this. When the angels lead the beast before Our Lord, they will say to it: "Behold God Who made you, and obey Him in what He will order you [to do]." When the beast hears this, it will be more frightened and dispirited than anyone knows save Our Lord God. Immediately it will say to the angels: "I entreat you to tell me why Our Lord asked for me and if He has made any other thing stronger than me in order to torment

¹⁰⁵ One seventh of the remainder is unaccounted for.

me." Thereupon the angels will answer it and will swear by God's power that they know nothing about this. Then the beast will begin to tremble all over and strike one leg against another and rattle its teeth together very violently owing to the fear it has of God. When it is brought into the presence of Our Lord, it will kneel before Him and will say to Him: "Dear Lord God, You Who are powerful above all things, I entreat You to tell me if You have made any other thing meant to torment me." Our Lord will answer it and will swear by His power and majesty that He has made no other thing meant to torment it: "[Rather, I created you for the purpose of tormenting] others and in order to avenge Myself on My enemies and destroy those who did not believe in Me and took from Me My unity and divided Me into several parts." Then the beast will say to Him in reply: "Lord, I entreat You to allow me to bow before You on account of this favor that You have granted me." And Our Lord will permit it. Straightway it will lower its head and will kneel before Him and will say to Him: "Glory to You, Lord God Who are lofty and powerful above all things." After speaking, it will sigh. I, Muhammad, swear by God Who had me see these things in such a short time that it will sigh so very loudly that if men in the world were to hear but a single one of its sighs, they all would perforce die of fright. Then Our Lord will order it to go into hell. Without delay it will begin to walk, and it will send forth so large a flame through its mouth that it will be seen throughout the world. And it will emit such a very great quantity of smoke through its nostrils as to make the air so exceedingly dark that people will not be able to see one another, save those illuminated by Our Lord's grace. The said angels [will walk] on the right and the left of this beast and will lead it into hell.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FOUR

When Gabriel told me about the said beast and angels in the manner I related to you, I was so greatly frightened that my heart began to quake in my breast. But despite all this, I did not fail to entreat Gabriel most gently to tell me whether everyone assembled on Judgment Day will see this beast or only God and His angels will. He answered me by saying that all the people will see it and will be extremely terrified of it;

consequently, they will shudder so very severely that it will seem to each as if his heart is going to stop in his breast and all his limbs, to separate from one another because of the intense trembling. Furthermore, they will lose consciousness and memory owing to fear of the beast as well as their sins which they will recall. Then Our Lord will order to be brought before Him a pair of scales, of which the middle shaft is as long as the distance from the east all the way to the west. Each of the two scales is so very large that it would cover the whole world. One of these scales consists of brightness and the other, darkness, and the one of brightness is on the right side of Our Lord, and the one of darkness, on the left. Good deeds will be put into the scale of brightness, and wrongs, into the one consisting of darkness. And a man will have two buckets just like those in which water is carried, and each will be as large as the greatest distance that the eyes can take in. [And into one of the buckets he will put his good deeds, and into the other, the sins that he committed.] When he arrives at the balance, he will empty the bucket with his good acts into the scale of brightness and the other bucket into the scale of darkness, and he will place himself between the two scales. [If] the sins weigh more than the good acts, he will go towards the side of darkness, and if the good deeds weigh more than the sins, he will go towards the side of brightness. "I tell you furthermore, Muhammad, that God will do so much for you that if there is someone, of whatever religion he may be, who has committed every sin of which he is capable and has done no good at all, and if he can manage to possess a written note saying *Le halla hilalla Muhagmet raçur halla*,¹⁰⁶ which means 'There is no other god besides God, and Muhammad is His Messenger,' and he puts it into the scale of brightness, this note will weigh much more than all his sins in the other scale. Afterwards his sins recorded in the universal register will all be obliterated at once so that they will no longer appear, nor will Our Lord ever recall them."

¹⁰⁶ See note 46.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-FIVE

I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, marveled greatly at the aforesaid things that Gabriel related to me, just as you heard earlier. But all the same, I entreated him further to tell me whether Judgment Day will be long or short. He answered me by saying the following: "Know, Muhammad, that this day will be as long for people as if it lasted fifty thousand years, but for Our Lord God, it will be shorter than a blink of the eye.¹⁰⁷ And I shall tell you why it will seem so long to people. This will be for two reasons: one of them is because they will remain standing constantly, and the other, because the good will long to come by the good things that they anticipate, and the rest will begin to be—and will be—very hungry and thirsty and quite anguished and dispirited. One and all will be so greatly frightened that everyone will tremble very much and will weep most bitterly. This day will be called *ybum kalkiama* [*yawm al-qiyâma*] in Arabic, meaning 'the day of resurrection and the last of all.' And know that heaven and earth will quake on that day, and most wondrous and terrifying voices will be heard, and straightway all the dead who are beneath the earth will rise. And this day will be the day of reckoning, the day of punishment, the day of reward; the day when each will find himself confronted with all the good and evil that he did in this world; the day, likewise, when men's faces [will be transformed, and] some will turn white and others, black; the day when ruses and misdeeds will not profit those who perpetrated them; the day when the father will not be able to help his son nor the son, his father; the day when the pregnant woman will not remember what she has in her belly. And all men will become as if intoxicated, not from wine, but from their tribulation and great fear. And on this day the old earth will be exchanged for a new, different one, and the old heaven, for another, new one.¹⁰⁸ And all these things will be as slight in Our Lord's sight as now would be a single boat upon the wide sea. And His gaze will fall upon everything, and His voice will be heard everywhere. And on this day all quarrels and disputes and maliciousness among people will be done away with so that they can do neither any wrong nor any good to one another, but they will wait continually for

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Second Epistle of Peter 3.8 and Koran 70.4.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Second Epistle of Peter 3.10-13.

what God wishes to grant them. And the hearts of saintly men and sages will be changed likewise, and all those who did not believe in God will see and recognize clearly their folly. And on this day kings will lose their powers and their cruelty, and truth will be established, and lying will be abolished. And this day will be of such great tribulation and anguish that no one could describe it, most especially for those who did not believe in Our Lord and were disobedient to His messengers, just as He Himself says in the Koran: "The earth will not receive nor will the sky cover those who did not believe the words that I sent My messengers to tell them."¹⁰⁹

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

Even though I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, had much burdened Gabriel by asking about the said matters, I did not fail for reason of all this to entreat him very gently to tell me what Azirat Bridge is like and what its function is. He answered me very kindly and told me: "Know, Muhammad, that Azirat is a bridge that Our Lord made as a test to determine who believes firmly in your religion or, likewise, who does not. This bridge is situated on high above hell, and it is finer than a hair from the head and sharper than any sword blade. Both sides are quite thick with pincers and hooks and iron spits longer than large lances and more pointed and trenchant than anyone could describe. This bridge is divided so that it constitutes seven bridges, one in front of the other, the first of which equals in length as much distance as could be covered in ten thousand years; the second, as much as one could travel in twenty thousand; the third, as much as could be traversed in forty thousand; the fourth, as much as one could cover in eighty thousand; the fifth, as much as a man could walk in one hundred sixty thousand; the sixth, as much as one could travel in three hundred twenty thousand; and the seventh, as much as could be [covered] in six hundred forty thousand years."¹¹⁰ When Our Lord orders your people to go to paradise

¹⁰⁹ Unidentified quotation or paraphrase.

¹¹⁰ Therefore, it would take 1,270,000 years to cross Azirat. Chapter 78 indicates, however, that the saved have at most 25,000 years to cross it. Chapter 69 says that the bridge is as long as a five hundred years' journey.

because they believed in your words and obeyed you, they will advance to the bridge without delay. When they arrive at the first bridge, they will be asked about their belief and the manner in which they believed. Those of good and firm persuasion will cross, and those who [are] not will be cut by the hooks and said pincers and will fall into the torments of hell's fire. When those who crossed the first bridge arrive at the second, they will be asked if they performed the prayers which were prescribed for them; and if they did so, they will cross, and if not, they will fall into the fire like the others mentioned before. When those who crossed the second bridge come to the third, they will be asked if they know anything from the Koran by heart, and those who have such knowledge will pass, and those who do not will fall into the fire. After they cross this bridge and reach the fourth, they will be asked if they fasted during their Lent¹¹¹ as they ought to have fasted, and those who did so will cross, and those who did not will fall like the others. After crossing this bridge and arriving at the fifth, they will be asked if those who promised to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca went there and remained for as many days as they were required, and those who did so will cross, and if not, they will fall into the fire. After they cross this bridge and come to the sixth, they will be asked if they bathed at the time for saying prayers and, also, after unclean acts,¹¹² and those who did so will pass, and those who did not will fall like the others mentioned above. When they reach the seventh bridge, they will be asked if they honored their father and mother, just as the law commands them, and if they did so, they will cross, and if not, they will fall into hell's fire to be tormented forevermore."

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SEVEN

Gabriel related to me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, still more concerning the nature of the said bridge, for he told me that its cutting edge runs through the middle, but on both sides where the pin-

¹¹¹ The Old French and Latin texts give the Christian terms *quaremme* and *quadragesima*, which are forty-day periods rather than the thirty-day Ramadan.

¹¹² See Koran 4.43 and 5.6.

cers and hooks and said iron spits are, stand the largest mountains, as it were, with the most abrupt ascent to be found anywhere. The slopes are so very extensive and arduous that were someone to go down them, it would seem as if he were descending into the abyss. These mountains are seventy thousand in number, and the ascent and descent of each of the mountains continue for the distance that could be covered in seventy thousand years. Between one mountain and the next lies very deep darkness stretching as far as a man could travel in three thousand years. And such is the nature of all seven bridges situated over hell, as was said earlier. And the flame issuing from hell is so great that it rises above the heads of those crossing the bridge for a distance equal to a seventy thousand years' journey. The other flames on the right and left are of the same nature so that those crossing walk as if in the middle of a street of fire, and when they look upwards or straight ahead or behind or to the right or left, they see only flames and fire that burn more intensely than anyone could describe; and in looking down, they see hell and the seven gates about which you heard earlier. Gabriel told me further that from each of these gates flow seventy thousand very large rivers of fire, and from each of the rivers, one hundred thousand streams. In each of the streams are a thousand dragons and just as many scorpions, the smallest of which is as large as [the distance] that could be covered in ten thousand years. Each of the dragons and scorpions has seventy thousand tails, and in each tail it has ten thousand joints, and on each joint, ten thousand stingers quite full of venom. When the sinner falls into hell, the dragons and scorpions seize him and fling some of this venom on him, and they destroy him so that nothing seems to remain. But afterwards he returns to his former state in order to be tormented further. Subsequently they cover him with seventy skins, excepting the one that he had, and each of these skins is seventy cubits thick. [The space] between one skin and the next is entirely full of snakes and scorpions which bite him most severely and poison him so grievously that he would more willingly choose to die a thousand times than endure this suffering. Besides all this, the fiery flame will burn him seventy thousand times a day. Yet he will never be able to die because of this, for Our Lord God does not wish it; rather, he will live forever so that he may endure more punishments in hell. And they will continue without end just as Our Lord Himself says in the Koran: "After the sinners'

skins are burned, We shall make them new skins so that they may suffer more torments, for God is wise and powerful above all things.”¹¹³ Furthermore, Gabriel next related to me the following: “Know, Muhammad, that the sinners who fall into hell will endure another punishment besides those which I described to you: all day long they will cut logs, and when night comes, they will be burned among them.”

CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

When I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, heard what Gabriel told me about the punishments that sinners will suffer in hell, just as you heard above, I felt so much sorrow because of it that I began to weep very bitterly. But I did not fail on account of all this to entreat him to tell me if the people who cross the aforesaid bridge will go running quickly or moving at a very gentle pace, or if some will go in one manner and others in another. And he began to relate to me the following: “Know, Muhammad, that on this day many of your people, both men and women, will fall from the bridge down into hell, for Our Lord God will divide your people into seven groups and will address them thus: ‘Let those among you go forward who think themselves most deserving of paradise.’ Without delay all will start to run and go to the bridge. You, Muhammad, will stand at the bridgehead, on the other side towards paradise, and you will shout very loudly: ‘Ah! Lord God, help my people, help!’ When your people hear this, they will go running to the bridge packed as thickly as a swarm of locusts when it drops to the ground. I, Gabriel, shall be with the nations of your people and shall shout loudly: *Arrabi, çallam, çallam!*¹¹⁴ which means ‘Savior, save, save!’ And beneath those who are crossing, the said bridge will shake just like a leaf of the tree called palm when the wind strikes it very hard. Those who break free from the first group in traversing will cross as quickly as lightning when it thunders very loudly; those of the second, like the wind when it blows quite hard; those of the third, like a bird flying very vigorously on high; those of the fourth, like a good, light horse well disposed to running; those of the fifth, like a man who

¹¹³ Koran 4.56.

¹¹⁴ *Yâ rabbî, sallim, sallim!*

is straight and fit and runs well; those of the sixth, like a man who walks very nimbly and trots well; and those of the seventh, like a small child who goes along on his hands and feet when he begins to walk. And there will be some who cross the bridge crawling on their chests and others who cling to the bridge with one of their hands; and when they feel the fire, they will let go with this hand and will hold on with the other; and when the fire touches the other hand, they will release it, too, and will want to hold on with their feet; but one foot will slip away from them, and they will hold on with the other; and they will continue to suffer thus all the while they are crossing the said bridge. And there will be those who, having crossed the bridge, are as black as charcoal because of the fire's flame that burned them. And there will be some who suffer this hardship a day and a night, and others, two days and two nights, and some others, a month or two or three, and still others, a year or two or more. Thus the count will increase until there will be some who endure this affliction for twenty-five thousand years,¹¹⁵ and this will amount to half of Judgment Day, for it will last fifty thousand years,¹¹⁶ so that before half the day is over, those who should go to paradise will be in paradise, and those who [must go] to hell will be in hell, just as Our Lord God says in the Koran: 'On Judgment Day, before half the day is over, those in paradise will be in the greatest repose of glory that has ever been, and those in hell, in the greatest torment.'"¹¹⁷

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

After Gabriel finished his account concerning the aforesaid matters, I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, looked and saw that the sinners endured different sorts of torment in hell, whereupon I felt such great sorrow in my heart that I began to perspire all over owing to the profound anguish it caused me. For I saw that some had their lips cut off with large scissors of glowing fire, and then I asked Gabriel who

¹¹⁵ Cf. the different indications of the time required to cross the bridge in chapters 69 and 76 above.

¹¹⁶ See Koran 70.4.

¹¹⁷ A paraphrase of Koran 25.24-26, 55.43-76, 69.21-32, or 88.1-16?

they were. He told me that they had spread talk in order to put people at odds, and others with their tongues cut out had borne false witness.¹¹⁸ Then I saw others hanging by their genitalia from fiery hooks, and they had committed adultery in this world. Afterwards I saw so many women that it was amazing, and they all were hanging by the middle of their genitalia from large chunks of wood, and these blocks were suspended from chains of fire that burned more wondrously than could be described. I asked Gabriel who these women were, and he told me that they were profligate women who had not desisted from committing acts of debauchery and fornication. Moreover, subsequently I saw many men who had most comely persons and appeared very well dressed, and I recognized that they were rich men from among my people, and they were all burning in the fire. I asked Gabriel why these men were burning, for I indeed know that they used to give many alms to the poor. Gabriel answered me that even though they had given alms, they had been quite prideful, and they had done much wrong to the common people.¹¹⁹ And in this manner I saw all the sinners, who were tormented in conformity with their individual sins. Then I entreated Gabriel to take me away from the place where we were, for I felt such great pity and grief in seeing this that I could in no way endure it. Thereupon he said to me: "Muhammad, what do you think of the very numerous and momentous things that Our Lord has revealed to you through His compassion?" I answered him: "Indeed, no human heart could conceive of the honor or the good that Our Lord God has bestowed upon me, inasmuch as He has had me see His power and His glory and has revealed to me the possessions and honors prepared for good people and the punishments and torments to be administered to sinners." Subsequently Gabriel said to me: "Muhammad, have you thoroughly committed to memory all that you saw?" I answered him. "Yes." "Then go," said he, "and just as you saw all these things, tell and reveal them to your people so that they may know them and keep to the straight path of the faith and may consider and mind how to enter paradise and preserve themselves from hell."

¹¹⁸ See Koran 24.22-23.

¹¹⁹ These sinners are perhaps Muhammad's Quraysh tribesmen mentioned in Ibn Ishâq, p. 143.

CHAPTER EIGHTY

After relating and explaining all these matters to me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, Gabriel told me moreover the following: "Muhammad, you will go henceforth with the grace of Our Lord, and I shall accompany you as far as the stepping-stone where you descended before the Temple of Jerusalem; and then you will mount Alborak, and it will convey you to your home." Having told me this, he took me by the hand and led me to the ladder by means of which I had ascended into heaven. We descended until we came to the aforementioned stepping-stone. When I arrived there, I found Alborak waiting for me. Seeing it made me most happy, and I went to it in order to mount. Then Gabriel embraced me tightly and said to me: "Ah! Muhammad, may God aid and guide you wherever you go, and may He grant you the grace to be able to remember what you saw and explain it to people so that they may know how to recognize truth and error and keep to the right path and preserve themselves from the wrong one through the revelation that you will make to them." When he finished saying this, straightway I mounted Alborak and returned to my home. It was already nearly dawn then, and I dismounted and commended Alborak to God. In departing, it bowed and entreated me to pray to Our Lord on its behalf. Then I entered my house and found my wife Omheni¹²⁰ still sleeping in her bed. And when I sat down on the edge of the bed, she awoke immediately, and as she saw me and recognized that I was very happy, she asked me why I was joyous. I related to her then all that Our Lord had revealed to me concerning His power and His glory. She answered me by saying: "Ah, Messenger of God, since you are so tired, I entreat you to lie down in this bed and rest until it is morning and broad daylight." I answered her that I would not do so: "Rather, I shall go to the mosque and shall relate these things to the men of Quraysh, who are of my lineage." Then she pleaded with me that I ought not do it and told me: "Know, Muhammad, dear friend, that in my opinion, they will consider it more a lie than truth, and they will scoff and laugh at you—know it well." Afterwards she told me further that I should not relate this until there were more Muslims than then, for they were still too few.

¹²⁰ See note 4 above.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-ONE

When my wife Omheni told me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, what you heard above and I left her in order to go to the mosque, the day was then bright. While walking thus, I encountered within the enclosure of my house my other wife, named Hasce [*‘Â’ishah*],¹²¹ and my daughter Fatima[h],¹²² who both were coming towards me together. As soon as they saw me, they greeted me and asked me why I was so joyous. I answered them that the joy I felt came from Our Lord God’s having revealed to me His power and His glory and all the heavens and lands and celestial gardens and regions of hell: “And, so, I am going to the mosque in order to relate the things that I saw to those of my lineage of Quraysh.” Thereupon they said to me and pleaded most gently that I ought not tell them this, for they would consider it a very great falsehood and would say that I was drunk. Then I told them: “Leave it at that, and entreat me no further about it, for by no means shall I fail to recount to them all this just as I saw it; and after telling them, I shall then relate it all to you in order.” Having told them this, I left them and came upon Habenabez [Ibn *‘Abbâs*],¹²³ my cousin. As soon as he saw me, he cried out: “Ah! how is God’s Messenger?” and I related to him everything that I had seen just as you heard earlier. He replied to me immediately by saying: “What does this mean? Do you intend to relate these matters to the men [of] Quraysh? Know that if you do so, they will say that this is all a big lie and that you are mad and foolish.” Then I replied to him: “Know that by no means shall I fail to tell them, since Our Lord God ordered me to do so.” Without delay I entered the mosque and found there all my lineage of Quraysh and along with them Habubekar [Abû Bakr], surnamed Cedik [Siddîq] in Arabic, which means ‘Believer.’¹²⁴ When I entered therein, they all rose

¹²¹ Muhammad’s third wife, the daughter of Abû Bakr. She would have been a very young child at this time.

¹²² The daughter of Muhammad and Khadîjah, his first wife.

¹²³ ‘Abdallâh Ibn ‘Abbâs, the son of Muhammad’s uncle ‘Abbâs Ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib and a traditionist of early Islam, was quite possibly born after the night journey and ascent.

¹²⁴ Muhammad’s father-in-law and immediate successor as temporal and spiritual leader of the Muslims. For his surname al-Siddîq, see Ibn Ishâq, pp. 182-83.

for me. But a little before this occurred, a man named Halmuakim,¹²⁵ who acted as a judge among them, and with him, too, Habubekar,¹²⁶ another cousin of mine, one who did not wish me well, said to those assembled: "Behold Muhammad who has come to tell you the biggest lies ever related by human mouth." Yet I did not fail because of all this to go to them and recount everything I had seen.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO

After entering the mosque where the men of Quraysh were, as you heard, I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, greeted them all most joyfully and looked at them with shining eyes. Since they had risen for me, I had them all sit down, and then I began to address them as follows: "Ah, Quraysh, blessed company, God sends me to you so that I may tell you and inform you about the things that through His sweet grace He revealed and made known to me last night, for He showed me His great power and His most grand majesty, and He honored me to the degree that I shall tell you. And I shall recount to you all the wonders that He disclosed to me and the things that He ordered me to do and you, likewise. It is fitting then for you to prepare your ears and hearts to hear and comprehend the matters that I shall relate to you and for you to be disposed to execute and obey my commandments, for I am the Messenger of God sent specially to you at this moment and, thereafter, to everyone. I inform you with certainty that if you do what I order, you will obtain great good and honor therein." After this, I

¹²⁵ According to Cerulli, p. 246, n. 348, he is al-Mut'îm Ibn 'Adî. Since *al-muhâkim* means 'judge'—*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 329, n. 159—it is likely that the Castilian translator mistook this word in his Arabic source for a proper name.

¹²⁶ He is of course not Abû Bakr but, perhaps, Abû Jahl among Muhammad's numerous enemies in Mecca. See examples of Abû Jahl's mockery of the Prophet in Ibn Ishâq, pp. 141-43 and 181. Ibn Ishâq names many scoffers among Muhammad's tribesmen. The most recent editors of the Latin version indicate that this error could only have been made by a non-Muslim—*Le livre de l'échelle*, p. 329, n. 160. We might add that the error is simply a repetition of Abû Bakr's name written a few lines above, and the Castilian translator, Bonaventura da Siena, or a scribe could easily have made it.

recounted to them everything I had seen that night, just as the book¹²⁷ detailed it earlier. To each word that I spoke, Habubekar, the one surnamed Cedik, responded by saying: "Ah! Muhammad, you speak the truth!" And all the others were silent and spoke not a word. When I finished my speech, they all rose facing me most angrily and said to me: "Ah! liar, how dare you speak such words? You wish to have us understand thereby that in a single night you went to the Temple in Jerusalem and saw everything that is within it and, afterwards, you saw all the heavens and all the lands and celestial gardens and regions of hell! And you tell us that between one heaven and the next is as much space as could be covered in five hundred years and that each of them is of this same thickness! And we know indeed that it is at the very least a month's journey from here all the way to the said temple! How, then, do you expect us to believe you regarding anything that you recounted to us?" In addition to this, they addressed remarks so numerous and of such a nature to me that I did not know how I should answer them. But the aforesaid Habubekar replied to them: "Good lords, everything that Muhammad related to us can indeed occur through God's great power."

CHAPTER EIGHTY-THREE

The men of Quraysh addressed the aforesaid bootless words and many others most angrily to me, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, and insulted me very greatly in replying to me. But I bore it all patiently on account of the great love I had, first, for Our Lord and, next, for them. Finally they said to me: "If you are the true Messenger of God as you present yourself, inasmuch as you saw those things that you related to us here with your own mouth, do tell us then where our caravan which must pass through Jerusalem is, and what it is carrying, and when it is due to arrive here." For the men of Quraysh had sent out this caravan comprising forty animals in order to bring them provisions that they needed, and it was to pass through Jerusalem, as said earlier. When they questioned me thus regarding their caravan, I could not answer them immediately, for God had shown me nothing about it that

¹²⁷ Note the shift from an oral report to a book, one not yet written at this moment in the narration.

night while revealing the aforesaid things to me. Therefore I lowered my head and shrouded it with my shawl, and I began to ponder for a short time and pray to Our Lord God very humbly to grant through His compassion that I see and know the things about which the men of Quraysh had questioned me so that I could report to them the truth of it and they would consider me the true Prophet and Messenger of Our Lord because of my answer. When I finished my prayer, at once Our Lord ordered Gabriel to bring together the whole world from the east to the west and the seas and lands and creatures and everything else in it and to place them before me so that I could see them clearly, just as if I were holding them in my hand. And this was done immediately. Then I looked and saw the whole world and the said temple and caravan, and I saw how many animals there were and what each was carrying. After seeing this, I raised my head and looked at all those around me. Straightway Habubekar, the very firm believer in God's law about whom I told you, spoke within the hearing of everyone and said the following before I uttered a word: "Ah! Muhammad, I know indeed that you are truthful and that you have learned the whole truth [in this matter]!"

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FOUR

When I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, learned all the truth about the said caravan and heard what Habubekar, the firm believer, said to me, I looked towards the men of Quraysh and told them with a joyful expression: "Ah! lineage of Quraysh, you who are gathered here, you thought that I lied about the matters which I related to you and Our Lord deigned to reveal to me, and you wish to put me to the test concerning your caravan. Know truly then that God Who revealed to me the other things about which I spoke to you also disclosed to me the truth regarding your caravan, and He informed me of it through the angel Gabriel. I tell you that in this caravan are forty animals, of which ten are loaded with bread, another ten with dates, ten more with dried figs, and the remaining ten with raisins, and they are so close at hand that, doubtless, they will arrive yet today." When I said this, the forenamed Habubekar rose to his feet at once and spoke aloud

so that all heard him: "Ah! good lords of Quraysh, herein you can know that in all his words Muhammad is the true Messenger of God. Go and verify these things, and you will discover that the truth is, neither more nor less, just as he told you." Together they immediately started looking at one another, and all rose to their feet, and they walked in the direction of the caravan in order to find out if what Muhammad¹²⁸ had told them was true or not. And they discovered that such was the truth with regard to each particular. Yet they were not willing to believe him on account of all this nor of the words, either, which Our Lord says in the Koran: "Praised be God Who carried His servant from the mosque in Mecca all the way to the Temple of Jerusalem in a single night,"¹²⁹ and "He revealed to him the things which He did not disclose to others living up to now nor [will disclose to any] coming after."¹³⁰ And know that all the declarations in the Koran pronounced against those who do not believe firmly in God's law are expressed because of the Meccans, for they were never willing to believe except when constrained by the sword, just as Our Lord says in the Koran: "I frightened them so that they would believe, and instead of this, they increased their obstinacy and became more miscreant."¹³¹ And the declarations that you will find there in the Koran which speak in favor of those who believe firmly are expressed because of the people in the city named Medina and also called Acrip [Yathrib], for they believed on account of their good volition, without any coercion, just as God says in the Koran: "Those who believe firmly should believe of their own accord, not because of any coercion."¹³²

¹²⁸ The narration shifts here from the first to the third person; it returns to the first person at the beginning of chapter 85.

¹²⁹ Koran 17.1.

¹³⁰ Koran 53.10 and 53.18?

¹³¹ Koran 6.42-43 and 17.60.

¹³² This unidentified quotation or paraphrase perhaps refers to the frequently repeated assertion in the Koran that God's Messenger is responsible only for preaching—if people do not believe him of their own accord, he is not accountable for them, nor does he need to try further to persuade them. See Koran 2.256 and 72.23.

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE

After these things occurred just as I, Muhammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, told you, the majority of the men of Quraysh believed the words that I had spoken to them for reason of the truth I told them concerning their caravan, and they said to me that it seemed truly a thing which came from God's immense power when He showed me such great love and [revealed] what He had never disclosed before nor [will] later to any other. They entreated me to have all this written down for them so that they could thus report it accurately and show it to all peoples just as it had happened to me. On their unanimous recommendation, I at once asked Habubekar, about whom I spoke to you earlier, and along with him Abnez [Ibn 'Abbâs], both very firm believers in God's law and most upright men of good faith and repute, if they would write down everything that had happened to me and will happen to me henceforth. They granted my request most gladly and wrote this book named *halmaereig* verbatim in conformity with the occurrences. And this book was written in the eighth year after the spirit of God¹³³ descended upon me and I began to prophesy.

We, Habubekar and Abnez, attest with true heart and pure conscience that the matters which Muhammad related above are completely true, so that all those who will hear them told ought surely to place their trust in them as regards each particular just as we have written them down and shall do so henceforth.

The book was translated from Spanish into French in the year of Our Lord God one thousand two hundred sixty-four, in the month of May.

¹³³ See note 36 above. Some commentators believe that these visions occurred immediately after his call or around five years later.

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